UNCLE PHIL

BY

MRS. JOHN M. CLAY

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UNCLE PHIL

A NOVEL

Josephine R. Clay.

BY

MRS. JOHN M. CLAY

Author of "What Will the World Say," "Only a Woman," and "Some Little of the Angel Still Left."

"Pleasure is evil's chief bait; the body the principal calamity of the soul; and those thoughts which most separate it and take it from the affections of the body most enfranchise and purify it."—*Plato.*

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MRS. JOHN M. CLAY.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Mrs. John M. Clay is a Kentuckian, the daughter of Col. Russell, who was well known in his day. In her girlhood she accompanied her father on various excursions, so that she began to see and understand life almost as soon as she opened her eyes. She early went to California, where she met and married Col. Eugene Erwin, a grandson of Henry Clay, who was killed during the Civil War at Vicksburg. Returning later to Kentucky, she met and eventually married John M. Clay, the youngest and only surviving son of Henry Clay. The great orator had been fond of blooded stock, a taste which his son inherited. Mrs. Clay shared in this taste and, under her husband's tutelage, became an expert stock farmer. After his death, she carried on at Ashland, which her husband had inherited from Henry Clay, his celebrated thoroughbred stock farm with increasing success.

Mrs. Clay has been devoted not only to stock farming, but also to literature. She has thought much and written not a little during these years and one result is this volume. UNCLE PHIL shows an insight and an outsight which entitle it to public consideration, especially as a view of the Old South, now fast fading into history.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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UNCLE PHIL.

CHAPTER I.

FAIR AND FREE IS THE KING'S HIGHWAY.

"Keep your heart as light as you can,
An ounce of care killed a man."

The inhabitants, which are mostly of the Spanish race, of the peaceful little city of Bonito, are in the enjoyment of the post-meridian siesta.

There are exceptions, however, for, standing in the corridor of an ancient adobe building—its flagstaff, from which floats the American flag, proclaims its official character—and fronting the pier, for Bonito has a seaport, are three young people: sister and brothers, as evidenced by the strong resemblance they bear one to another; cast in the same generous mold, with the same upright carriage, lofty poise of head, and noble, finely chiseled features. The girl is young, not eighteen, and her brothers only a few years older.

These young people, contemplating a fishing excursion, are busily engaged selecting hooks and lines from a large assortment, filling a good-sized box; that is, Miss Geraldine Southampton has the

matter in hand with an arbitrariness that does not allow a different opinion to emanate from either of the young men, had they one, which most likely they had not, for the young lady's manner clearly indicated that she knew what she was about. Her quick fingers soon filled a small basket with all she deemed needed; then she announced in a voice distinctly clear and musical, though tinctured with an imperious ring, such as the fortunate individual, male or female, unused to contradiction, will naturally acquire: "Now, South and Fred, we are ready, and we are going to fish for fish on the briny deep—every mother's son of us."

This questionable piece of witticism receives plaudits beyond its merits, and the three of them begin their walk toward the mole. At its steps lies a small boat, manned by two oarsmen of widely differing places of birth. Uncle Phil, the first in importance, was a "cullered pusson," as he himself stated with distinctness and frequency, leaving no room for a reasonable doubt. Also that he first saw the light of day in "Wirginny" was a circumstance of no inconsiderable pride to him, and was superfluously commented on; at least such was the opinion entertained by those who enjoyed his acquaintance. The other boatman was a Hawaiian, and per consequence, known as "Kanaka Jack."

The distance to be traversed was short, and, the young lady placing herself between her brothers,

they started, but she soon about-faced, preferring to progress the backward way, as the opportunity was thus afforded of carrying on her conversation face to face. This conversation, or rather monologue, for such was its character, was animated and joyous until the very brink of the unbalustered mole was reached. Here she folded her hands, and, poising on the tip of a well-made French boot, executed a pirouette. The time consumed in this performance was short, yet long enough to effect a marked change in the temper of Miss Southampton.

"Which of you did it?" she demanded sharply.

Simultaneously, the brothers glancing over their shoulders, understood the situation.

"It was not me," promptly asserted the younger brother, called Fred, ungrammatical in the eagerness of his denial.

The elder brother looked confused, thereby confessing guilt. The angry young lady went on vivaciously: "What do you mean, Southampton? We were going to have such a comfortable afternoon; and you have spoiled it all. Caramba!"

"Sister," said the offender apologetically, "I did not invite Mr. Hamilton, indeed I did not. He chanced to be passing when I told Jack to have the boat in readiness, and to put a rug in, as you were going out on the bay with us. And when he said, he believed he would go along with us, of course, I couldn't tell him he was not wanted." This was

said in an undertone, and meant for Miss Southampton's private ear, and as a suggestion that social amenities should ever rise superior to such trifles as personal animosities. The appeal for pax Miss Southampton trampled under foot, and she answered, raising her voice, and changing her posture so as to let the full force of an uncompromising glance of displeasure rest upon the newcomer, whose appearance being perfectly correct and of the genus gentilhomme, does not seem to warrant such a display of hostility: "Of course you couldn't! Not having a tongue in your head!"

To come to the gist of the matter, the weakness to love where one should not is a common frailty, or a common attribute. Who cares for the willing peach just to your hand? The one that is high up and difficult to get is the desirable one. And the head and front of this Mr. Hamilton's offending was a fortuitous fondness for the good-looking young lady which led him on to persistency of attentions after she had in the most unreserved manner indicated that she wanted none of him. But he had heard about faint heart, etc., and being of a determined, not to say obstinate, disposition, he determined to persevere and take his chance for a rosier future, utterly ignoring rebuffs. So, not choosing to see Miss Geraldine Southampton's black looks, he constrained himself to say quite cheerfully: "I am just in time not to be too late."

With a laudable effort to pour oil on the troubled waters, the brother who had been called Southampton said, in a propitiatory tone: "Come, sister, let me help you down."

"I am not going," she said shortly, "and it is very provoking," looking the late arrival full in the face, "to have my fishing party spoiled by this intrusion."

The brothers remained silent, but exchanged comical looks, as they passed down the steps and seated themselves in the boat; then came the invitation: "Jump in, Hammy."

"I have changed my mind, and decided not to go," replied Mr. Hamilton.

The little boat is quickly pulled out of the dark green waters contiguous to the mole, and is dancing merrily over the short cross waves of the groundswell.

"Hasta luego," said the brothers, raising their hats to their sister, and being good-hearted young gentlemen, they bestow upon her companion a nil desperandum look. Then brother Fred exemplifies the deceitful nature of a man's heart by indulging in an unsympathizing laugh before remarking: "I rather think Hammy will be favored with a round, unvarnished tale."

"What's the use of a man making a fool of himself?" was the free comment of the other, while selecting a line to drop over into the bay. "And," continued the young philosopher, "when it is estab-

lished beyond a doubt that the moon is not to be had for illuminating purposes why can't one be contented with a serviceable bull's-eye lantern?"

Miss Southampton barely takes time to give "Hammy" a scornful look before she, rudely turning her back, starts homeward.

The infatuated young man will not be warned—in such cases though one were to rise from the dead to discourage a forward movement, it would be unavailing—and after a moment's hesitation, he is at her side.

Her angry looks become angrier. So far this young lady has scarcely had a crumpled roseleaf to pass over, and that useful virtue, patience, is not inherent, nor has she yet acquired it, nor has it been necessary. Her pleasure, like the "je le veux" of Louis XIV., had been the recognized law, and without the foreshadowing of evil times to come, which extorted from the monarch the woeful: "Apres vous le deluge."

There is silence for a very short minute, then the young lady, facing her companion, said abruptly: "I have a word to say to you."

"It would give me pleasure to listen to a great many words from you," was the polite response.

Her brown eyes flashed, and without the preliminaries of an accomplished fencer going through a series of courteous salutes while promising himself the pleasure of running his adversary through, she

raised her rapier, so to speak, and commenced hostilities of the most energetic character. "I would prefer not to be compelled to speak to you at all, and I will be brief and to the point. Without attempting to explain my aversion to you, it has been apparent to the meanest understanding, and had you the faintest conception of what belongs to the organization of a gentleman when you saw that attentions from you were disagreeable to me, you would have ceased them. But instead of that incontestably proper conduct what should you do—I have not been blind!—but go to work systematically to ingratiate yourself with Mrs. Southampton in order to afford you opportunities for your odious persecutions, when the very sight of you is hateful to me. I tell you now," she continued impetuously, "you must change your course, or I will complain to my brothers—and when I do," with emphasis, "you will be tossed into the bay."

The dull red that suffused his face alone showed how the girl's scorn had touched him, though he replied with immovable calmness:

"I think I might be able to prevent such a watery taking off. I am no Hotspur, but no one can tell what sword is in the scabbard till it is drawn—and the brothers might come to grief."

She laughed. The idea seemed to amuse her. "It is so supremely ridiculous," said she, "the warning that you might injure South or Fred. Why, they

are men, while you are so contemptible—that I have no name for you."

Had the young girl been wise she would have seen the dangerous light that shone in the gray eyes opposite to her, and paused before recklessly defying a demon born of a despised man's bad passions. It had been well for her could she have looked into futurity and asked herself the question, how was she prepared to resist in a deadly combat? Of what avail would be her honest, open, childishly passionate cut and thrust against the thirsty blade that merely parried; yet always creeping closer and closer until the moment served to overleap her guard and effect its certain work of destruction.

Just so was the hapless Marie Antoinette all unconscious of danger; and rather than make concessions to Jaques bon homme would prefer being sent to the tower for two months. And her flippant speech when told that the people had no bread, "Why, then, let them live on cake," was awful in its recoil. The beast she had trodden under foot rose supreme over the ancient dynasty and inaugurated its own Reign of Terror, and the Queen's proud head was sent to the guillotine.

Meanwhile, strike up the music!—vive la dance—fare gayly along until surprised by the hand-writing on the wall. There is time enough later on to bring in the death's head at the feast.

Hamilton stood quite still after her insulting

words, and suffered her to walk away, then he repeated in a low, quivering tone, every muscle of his face working with rage: "Contemptible, am I? You have gone too far, my young princess. Before your time bona fide sovereigns have been compelled to abdicate and grovel at the mercy of the victor. Success is promised to those who can wait. I can wait, and perhaps I, too, may laugh—and laugh last."

As the crow flies, the distance was short that lay between Miss Southampton and her home, but that versatile young lady was not in the humor to confine herself to straight mathematical lines. And she stayed her progress to deliver a fluent lecture to some Spanish muchachos who were fishing for tarantulas—which could be seen in all their ugliness moving low down among the damp timbers supporting the little pier—on the pursuit of so ignoble a pastime. Then she, very meritoriously, assisted an old woman who had dropped her basket and scattered the pine cones she was carrying home to boil her kettle, and she impressed two naval officers of high degree, who had just been rowed to the shore from their ship, in the same charitable work, despite their evident reluctance, and would not allow them to desist until the very last cone was picked up, and she laughed so merrily, when they glanced ruefully at their soiled gloves, that they went on their way discomfited. Her attention then was directed to a squad of raw recruits a drill-sergeant had brought

down from the fort; they had set up a regimental target on the beach for ball-practice. Seeing their awkwardness, the capable Miss Southampton took them in charge, and her instructions were so lucid, and illustrated by some splendid shots, that the non-commissioned officer gazed at her in open-mouthed wonder, and one of the squad, an Irishman, declared with national gallantry: "It is meself that could stand here till the crack of doom, without mate or drink, watching of the swate young leddy."

She next took in an awning under which some sailors—allowed on shore for the purpose—sat mending sails, and she returned their salutations. "An' please mum, we would wish you a good arternoon," with a politeness more gracious than she would have shown to their officers. With evident interest she observed the stitching done by their leather-sheathed fingers, and told them that they were doing their work very well. These men were rough, the scrapings of their different nationalities, yet from this hour, in which Colonel Southampton's daughter had gone out of her way to speak to them a few words of genuine kindness, they felt something less of bitterness toward their betters, and that "the quality was not all agin us, and pity there ain't more like her."

A few more minor meetings and greetings, engagements for rides and drives, dances, and so on,

bring her to the corridor she had so lately quitted, and where now stands a man singularly handsome, and so apparently young, that it is a matter for surprise when Miss Geraldine Southampton, in the exuberance of her spirits, dances rather than walks up to him, and calls him papa. Then in the gladness of her fresh, young heart she dances backward to the extreme verge of the open corridor and rests there poised on one foot.

Her father's loving glances rest upon her without a shade of uneasiness. It were as well to fear a bird might fall, so free and graceful is every movement of that lithe, winsome body.

She is above the average height of women, but formed in the perfection of symmetry. Her clear, sparkling eyes and the brilliant hue of her complexion are due to robust health, but the ever-changing expression of her mobile features come from an immortal, indwelling beauty, irresistible.

CHAPTER II.

LET THE JUSTICE OF THE KING PASS BY.

"Curious fool, be still!
Is human love the growth of human will?"

Colonel Southampton is a Virginian, and indelibly stamped on his forehead are the cabalistic letters F. F. V. Many years previous his large estates had been swallowed up by the too ardent support of a political friend who failed in his election. Finding himself in the position of a financially ruined man he willingly accepted the office of consul to this far-away place. The expatriation, as it seemed, was accepted with greater willingness, allured by the hope that a change of climate would restore to health his invalid wife. Administration succeeded administration without the loss of his post. And when by the treaty of Guadaloupe Hidalgo California became one of the United States the office of consul lapsed and the genial, popular, gentleman was appointed collector of customs. Thus almost all the years of his daughter's life had been passed, as it were, under the immediate guardianship of the American flag; and well she loved its beautiful stars and stripes.

Life's pleasures which are often grudgingly be-

stowed, and like angel's visits come so few and far between, had been showered down upon this girl as from an overturned cornucopia.

To her father and brothers she was an object of idolatry; of the fetich worship of Uncle Phil, the faithful servant who voluntarily had left kith and kin to follow the broken fortunes of her father's house; of praise and flattery, to injurious excess, from the resident grandees who had watched the lovely child grow up "como nosotras;" and of many of the naval and army officers of her own country, besides the naval officers of almost every nationality whose ships had touched in at that golden port. Small wonder then that her face should wear the joyous gleams of a spirit unacquainted with misfortune and sorrow.

Something of a pang—perhaps not the first—smote the heart of Colonel Southampton as he marked the radiant being before him. What if sorrows should befall her—the slightest one he would die to avert. How could she bear them?

His face clouded—an unpleasant duty was before him. He sighed.

"Come here, Gerry, I have news for you."

The young princess clasping her hands, and with a spring almost as artistic as Helarios, bounded to her father's side.

"Now, don't be vexed," he said soothingly. "I wouldn't tell you until the last moment, but——"

plunging in medias res, "Southampton and Frederic are to leave us in the morning, in the Arrow, for China."

"Those boys are going to do nothing of the sort! I am not going to allow it!" she said imperiously.

"Listen, my own pet," was the grave answer. "Your brothers are men now, and it is high time for them to engage in the commercial enterprises of men. This is a good opening for them. They must begin to make money for my Gerry. I have been doing little else all my life than spending. I am a poor man."

A bright flush suffused her face.

"Papa! papa!" she exclaimed impetuously, "Oh, why did you not tell me this before? It is I who have been spending all your money! Mrs. Southampton says"—she suddenly stopped, embarrassed.

The present Mrs. Southampton was not her mother, of whom she had scarcely any remembrance, her place had been so soon filled by the handsome widower. But the fair young bride inherited delicacy of constitution, and after enjoying to the full a short season of post-nuptial gayeties—beyond her strength—succumbed to feelings of lassitude, passing her days on a sofa. Her only occupation was reading novels. The further indulgence of a nightly potion to induce slumber quickly became a habit.

Colonel Southampton had never been ill in his life, never so much as to feel "a little under the

weather," and how was it possible for him to understand hypochondria, that very subtle malady which coils round its victim and so successfully counterfeits every form of human suffering? That she frequently thought herself to be at the point of death was a stretch of her imagination too intrinsically ridiculous to excite sympathy. And small wonder that Colonel Southampton was soon forced to admit to himself that he, too, like Sinbad the Sailor, was burdened with an Old Man of the Sea. And it did not help the matter much that his equestrian was an invalid wife, whose peevish exactions were none the less hard to bear that they must imperatively be born in uncomplaining silence. His children, loving and admiring their brilliant father, regarded "Mrs. Southampton" with extreme disfavor, and in the endeavor to live as though she were not, adhered as much as was possible to the non-intercourse system; easy enough, as the lady seldom left her own apartments. And, oh, the pity of it! With all the inflexible strength of a weak nature she hated the young people living under the same roof; the sight of the health, youth and beauty, which had forever departed from her, exciting emotions of the bitterest resentment and envy.

"I was going to say, papa," continued Miss Geraldine, "that it is quite useless to import my gowns, gloves and boots. I have never thought much about it! But I must be a dreadful expense to you—

everything costs so high. My petticoats are made here, but they are seventy-five dollars apiece, and they are not embroidered up so very high. Just see," she said, raising her dress-skirt and gazing reflectively at the delicately embroidered white draperies.

"I have no doubt, Gerry, that your petticoats are perfectly correct," answered Colonel Southampton, not availing himself of the inspection invited, "and I have no fault to find with your clothes, which are exactly such as Miss Southampton should wear."

"I should be Miss Southampton in any clothes," she replied, giving a backward toss to her handsome head. "And, papa," she added wistfully, "why must Southampton and Frederic go away from us? Why cannot we stay together—and work together?"

"What kind of work could you engage in, Gerry?" he asked with a smile.

"Well," she answered, her face flushing, "that is not a question to be answered on the spur of the moment. Though I have a voice and could sing in concerts if I were not a Southampton. And, but for the same excellent reason, I could dance in public, to earn my share of the family bread. Also," throwing back her flowing, silken sleeve, and looking with approval at the round, firm, dimpled arm, "I could execute almost anything that required muscle. But," her face became radiant, a practical idea had flashed to the surface, "I can write in your

office! I write a better hand than either South or Fred—you know I do!"

"Yes, I do know so," he answered, and seeing the pretty pleading on her face, he wished to give her a pleasure. "Suppose you go now—the clerks are all gone—and write a clearance for the schooner Andromache carrying eight hundred tons burden. I am going now to meet an old friend I am expecting to arrive, whom I have not seen since our college days, when we roomed together. And I bespeak for him your good graces."

Feeling the perfect satisfaction, growing out of being useful to one she loved, like a fawn she sped to the apartment now closed, office hours being over. The room of itself was not attractive, desks and stools its only furniture, but the young lady was never happier in her life. The idea that she was about to transact business was positively bewitching. She could not keep her joy to herself, it had to be vocalized. "Ah!" she exclaimed, exultingly, "how happy are those who work—hard!—hard! every day of their lives."

The divine edict pronounced against our first parent Adam when driven out of that fair garden with its "four rivers to water every tree that had been planted, pleasant to look at and good for fruit," has been in operation nearly six thousand years. Some have caviled at it. Others have said it was a blessing in disguise, but to Colonel Southampton's

daughter was reserved the privilege of being the first to sing a paean in its praise.

She seated herself quickly, pulling up to her the huge Government inkstand with its bristling array of pens. Then the Form Book was opened, and in the glory of her enthusiasm she determined to spare no pains, and that this particular document should be the most elaborately handsome of any that had ever gone forth from any Custom House. She would execute with her pen an American eagle with its claws full of arrows hovering over the top of the page, and illuminate the capital letters in red ink. But one moment's reflection suggested that, artistic and unique as it certainly would be, it would be open to the criticism of not being plain business; and she promptly decided to do the work in a workmanlike manner, even to eschew flourishes.

In the frame of mind when one's work is always best done, the head and heart in unison, she began the paper by which under the revenue laws of the United States the schooner Andromache with her eight hundred tons burden was permitted to weigh anchor and vamose the harbor. For some moments she wrote on industriously, then with pardonable pride she paused to admire her handiwork, which was indeed admirable. Not in the least like the indistinct chirography of most fine ladies, resembling the aimless wanderings of an intoxicated fly; but

firm, well-formed characters, beautiful to see and beautiful to read.

At her back was an open window, through which streamed the sun's rays—silent, potent rays, ladened with odylic fluid—passing back and forth, over and around her—noiseless, invisible, mysterious forces, actively weaving their wondrous tissues and indissolubly uniting her life with that of another life, standing in the doorway.

Henceforth, for weal or woe, the influence of these two lives, one over the other, is cemented indestructibly, till death; till the dark river which rolls all around the world is passed—perhaps beyond. Under the influence of this cosmical power the girl trembled, conscious that some new, all-powerful feeling was about to possess her. She looked up.

A man, certainly older than her father, had entered the room. His rugged features were grave even to sternness. Not a person to incommode, was written in legible characters from head to foot. The self-confidence of his bearing denoted a man who was all and all to his own requirements.

The diffidence usual in accosting strangers of the opposite sex was out of the experience of Miss Southampton. Men of every age and degree had gone down before her without the least hesitation, without the slightest protest. But there was something disconcerting in this new-comer's steady gaze; yet never was a Southampton born to blench,

and she demanded, authoritatively: "Did you not see that the flag was down, and that office hours were over?"

"I am not on official business," said he, slightly raising his hat. "I called to see Colonel Southampton."

"My father is out, and I cannot tell you where you will probably find him."

"I think I will wait for him here," replied the gentleman, taking a seat.

"I am writing," said she sharply.

"Pray go on," was the answer, "you will not disturb me."

Miss Southampton felt a new sensation. She was accustomed to men losing their heads about her—and was probably not averse to it—and here was an infidel bringing no flowers to her altar. Mutely she raised her eyes as if to enquire why a fragment of the rather roughly plastered ceiling did not detach itself and fall down to crush him. And why she refrained from telling him that he was disturbing her, and request his absence, was the perplexing question. She was under the spell of some strange, new, compelling influence, and chafed under it.

With heightened color, and without a word, she recommenced her writing; but the usually facile pen became an awkward stick—it was impossible to write with that glum man looking on, and he

must be got rid of. She was wholly unaccustomed to sue, and it was with an obvious effort that she suggested, persuasively:

"You might smoke a cigar in the corridor while waiting."

"I do not care to smoke, and will wait where I am," he answered with decision.

The young lady was fairly frightened. Imagine the feelings of a commanding officer who makes the discovery when face to face with an enemy that his war material is of bad quality. For one brief moment she thinks of flight, then comes the nobler reflection that she is a Southampton, and having thrown a lance over the enemy's frontier, could neither retreat nor apologize, and if need be must die at her post.

With what intense relief must the general with damaged powder have heard the shouts of a supporting army coming to his assistance. Just so felt Miss Southampton when her quick ears caught the sound of her father's footsteps. In a moment more he had entered the room.

With exclamations of delight the two men clasped hands. Not since leaving William and Mary—a quarter of a century had passed—had these college chums met.

In the warmth of their greeting it was some moments before Colonel Southampton recollected to say: "Ah! here is my little daughter."

Query: Why is it, no matter how well-grown a girl may be, she is invariably introduced by her father after this fashion?

The introduction was acknowledged by the lady with cold dignity; by the gentleman without enthusiasm.

Miss Southampton measurably recovered from her loss of morale (she was not of the sort to stay conquered), and, ashamed of her involuntary weakness, hurriedly, so to speak, brought up her supports, dressed her lines, and, eager for aggressive action, said curtly:

"You have a name, I suppose?"

"My name is Smith," responded the gentleman.

"John Smith?" she asked airily.

"My Christian name is Paul—if you have any interest in knowing," he answered, showing some annoyance.

The skirmishers had closed in, and there was battle in the air; the young lady clatters up her howitzers.

"Yes," she said flippantly, "I have some interest in a certain way—it is de rigueur to acquire general information—and, of course, much trash gets mixed in. Evidently your parents were Bible readers, with a penchant for scriptural names, and I congratulate you on not being named Saul, or Nehemiah, or Hosea, or Maccabees, or some other of the gentle patriarchs, whose lives were more or less

edifying, but whose names are lacking in euphony."

In all the unpleasant experiences of Samson following his entanglement with Delilah nothing touched him in the tenderest place until he was sent for to make sport for the Philistine lords and ladies. Nothing like this had ever happened to Mr. Smith before, and in his righteous anger he was going to say that, in his opinion, she had mistaken the situation. But Colonel Southampton, observing with concern that his daughter and his friend were not taking to each other, hastened to interpose. He was of a sanguine nature, and hoped for better things.

"Come," said he, "let's get into more comfortable quarters."

"As for myself, I have that clearance to finish," said Miss Southampton, with gravity. "Besides, I have no wish to be the terrible third to spoil sport. I know you wish to be to yourselves to gloat over old times, and to recall the sweet remembrance, how pious you were, and the good example you set to other students whose inclinations tended to frivolity. I am speaking for my papa."

"Never mind the clearance, Gerry," answered Colonel Southampton, looking at Smith with a smile. "One of the clerks will finish it. I want you with us." So together they proceeded to that part of the building where were the apartments fitted up for the family.

CHAPTER III.

AN INFANT TERRIBLE.

"He who is not hammer is sure to be anvil."

It was a cosy parlor into which they entered. The lace curtains and the upright piano had been brought from Paris, the comfortable bamboo chairs from China, the sofa and American rocking chairs from Boston, and the nick-nacks from Japan and various other parts of the globe—all uniting to form that refinement of luxury with which those who have pride in pluralizing their ancestors take pains to surround themselves.

The door was left wide open to enjoy a view of the beautiful bay; the tide rushing in with a gentle pur almost lapped the foundations of the wooden corridor. Sometimes the heavy billows from the offing thundered in with a tumultuous dash, when doors had to be closed to keep out the drenching spray.

Possibly it were better had the doors been closed now. A woman carrying a child in her arms could not so unceremoniously have entered.

"Which of you gentlemen is Colonel Southampton?" she asked with the directness that denoted her visit to be of business, not compliment.

With inextinguishable politeness, Colonel Southampton rose, bowed, and asked in what way he could be of use to her.

"Well, sir, you see," she explained without circumlocution, "my husband he ain't well, he's been puny ever since he got that lance stuck into his side at San Pasquale, and I have just come up on the Sea Bird from San Luis Obispo to see Captain Baxter about getting pay for some beeves used by the California Battalion. And as I ain't so overly strong, and that hill going up to the fort is kinder steepish, I would like to leave my little son here until I get back."

"Certainly, madam," replied Colonel Southampton with fictitious warmth, and, being on slippery ground, he struck out boldly: "Certainly, my daughter will be delighted to entertain the little fellow," he cast an imploring look at Gerry, who, scorning to dissemble, said promptly:

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort." The lady's statement was true concerning the situation of the fort. To reach it there was a sharp acclivity to ascend, very fatiguing, particularly to a person carrying a burden. Therefore, though the mother saw plainly that her offspring would not be left in tender hands, yet she was aware that the laws of the state taking cognizance of his life and limbs, the young lady would neither murder nor maim him. So, deftly slipping the child into Colonel Southamp-

ton's arms, she walked away as fast as she could lay foot to the ground.

"Here, Gerry," said her father, coaxingly, "please take him, like a kind, dear, good-hearted girl."

"I shall not do it," was the undutiful answer.

Colonel Southampton being a man of the world, knew that the best way out of some situations was immediate flight, and without more ado, he placed the child upon the floor and fled.

"Such depravity is shocking," observed Miss Southampton.

"Would it be out of place in me," said Mr. Paul Smith, "to inquire for whom your remark is intended?"

This observation is unnoticed, the young lady intently watching that small specimen of humanity writhing on the floor, her face faithfully portraying all the gradations of astonishment, aversion, horror and despair.

The infant was at first bewildered and quiet, but soon realizing his abandoned condition, he began howling dismally—shriek after shriek pealed through the room.

Miss Southampton was greatly given to the harboring of fixed ideas, but in this wild uproar all remembrance of the strained relations which had characterized her short acquaintance with Mr. Smith was obliterated and forgotten.

Happily there is no law of Congress to compel

any one to consistency, or where would any of us be?

She even felt drawn toward him as people will feel drawn toward those threatened with the infliction of a common danger—and she made a motion as if to invite his assistance for their mutual protection. "This is unbearable," she gasped.

"You had better take him up," he counseled.

"You are the stronger." There was entreaty in her voice.

"Yes, I am the stronger," he assented in a tone indicating non-intervention, "but I have heard there was something soothing in a woman's touch to young children."

"I am not clear in my belief about that. And the proper thing to do would be to throw the creature into the bay, but I don't quite like the responsibility—one would never hear the last of it. Something must be done! The whole town will shortly be about our ears! Peace must be had," said Miss Southampton in staccato-like phrases, while circling round the baby, apparently nerving herself for some desperate mental and physical effort.

"You had better take him up head-foremost," advised Mr. Smith, with decision.

The advice seeming good, she made a vicious grab, seizing the fat little body, and began pacing the room with rapid and unequal footsteps. The terrific screams continued, subsiding only when

breath failed. Peace had been achieved after much sorrow, and with a sigh of relief the young lady rested her charge on a table. Standing there, though flushed and disheveled, she was very handsome. Mr. Smith thought so, and looked on admiringly in a disinterested sort of way—when—he almost doubted the evidence of his senses! With an exclamation of anger, the young lady dealt a blow, entirely disproportioned to the child's tender age. A blood-curdling yell ensued. "You have bitten me, you miserable little wretch!" cried Miss Southampton, holding up a finger, from which welled a drop of the crimson fluid.

The child's mother had not dallied by the wayside, but had made such haste as she could. Her interview with Captain Baxter had been brief, and most unsatisfactory about remuneration for the beeves consumed by Colonel Fremont's men.

She was told curtly: "The California Battalion was composed of volunteers, and a branch of the service he had nothing to do with." And his manner was so obviously expressive that he did not want to have anything to do with it, and did not intend to have anything to do with it, as to cause her great mental depression.

Poor woman! and was there no one to tell her that she had as well wave a red flag in the face of a short-horned dilemma as to go to a West Pointer about any volunteer business? Her anguish of mind

was much augmented on her return just in time to witness the discipline bestowed upon her infant son.

With a wild rush she dashed in and picked up the baby, which had tumbled to the floor, howling dismally.

"You abominable woman!" cried Miss Southampton, raising her voice,her indignation excited by a sense of her personal wrongs; "what are you doing with that child, how dare you bring him here?"

"I have a husband, madam," whimpered the woman irrelevantly.

"Who cares how many husbands you have?" replied Miss Southampton, very much excited, and quite unmindful that she was attacking the very groundwork of the social system.

No answer was made, the woman, carrying her olive branch, departed, weeping bitterly; and no doubt believing in her heart, as many a one had done before her time, that kindness and justice do not lie in a poor person's way.

It now occurred to Miss Southampton that her companion had been remiss in his duty, and that from a safe position of neutrality he had left her to struggle alone through the trying scene, giving her neither aid nor comfort.

"Such conduct is atrocious," she said to him, with flashing eyes.

"Whose conduct," he asked.

A cloud of wrath swept over her face, and Mr. Paul Smith was left the sole occupant of the room.

"Rather a spirited young person," he remarked, sotto voce, "but wonderfully handsome, and perhaps it is fortunate that her ideas and my ideas do not agree."

CHAPTER IV.

A MUSSEL STEW.

"Beware, dear girls, beware,
You had better lead apes—you know where,
Than ever fall in love."

The Arrow has shaken her white wings, and like a bird is gliding out of Bonito harbor, carrying with her the two young Southamptons.

This is the first real grief of her life, and Geraldine Southampton stands on the pier, where she had parted with her brothers in all the abandonment of grief.

Her father is entreating her to be comforted. And Uncle Phil is trying to dry his own eyes, while saying tremulously: "B'ar up, Miss Gerry, b'ar up, honey, b'ar up fer de ole Uncle Phil's sake. Please, chile, b'ar up like er good young 'oman—oh, Lordy! Good Gracious! has I los' my senses? I mean, honey, b'ar up like the Kunnel's darter."

Mr. Smith is there, too, but does not join in the sympathizing throng by which Miss Southampton is surrounded.

He has seen a good deal of the world, and has no difficulty in making up his mind that his old friend's daughter is the worst case of "spoiled" that

ever came under his observation. "And not a particularly bad sort, either," was his mental comment, "if she were not surrounded by such an army of imbeciles."

Miss Southampton's violent grief subsides, yielding to the arts of her father. His own distress is as nothing if he can console this young creature, who represents nearly all his world. "The boys are gone, Gerry," he said, soothingly, "and crying won't bring them back. Two or three years will soon roll around, and then what a joyful return there will be. Meanwhile you have your old dad. And I'll tell you what it is, Gerry, if you do not stop weeping this minute, you will make me cry, too, which will not be a pleasant on dit to get into circulation."

There really was so much pathos in his voice that his daughter became alarmed. A Southampton man shedding tears in public would be an indelible disgrace! And she hastened to say, as well as she could between sobs: "I a-m t-r-y-i-n-g t-o c-o-n-t-r-o-l m-y f-e-e-l-i-n-g-s, p-a-p-a, a-n-d I h-a-v-e n-o d-o-u-b-t I s-h-a-l-l s-u-c-c-e-e-d p-r-e-s-e-n-t-l-y."

Colonel Southampton is much encouraged.

"That is my brave little girl," he said in laudatory tones. "And now, Gerry," in tones still more laudatory, "a party of us are going to the Point. I have promised Smith a mussel stew, and won't you go along to make it pleasant for us?"

Mr. Smith's appearance does not indicate that her presence would add to his pleasure in the least.

"Papa," she answered, solemnly, "I am never going to another mussel stew until those boys return."

"How will it be about the bal militaire to-morrow?" he asked.

"Papa," in the same lachrymose tone, "I am never going to a dance of any sort until my brothers return."

"Oh! yes you will, Gerry," said he, coaxingly; "if you desert us, all our little gayeties are at an end."

Instantly there was a chorus of clamors that Miss Gerry would not reduce the world to despair by withdrawing her presence from its festivities.

Miss Southampton finally comes to terms, and gives a promise that she will do violence to her feelings of private grief for the public weal.

Later on, when she made her appearance at the designated place, where the mussels most do congregate, it was evident quite that the joyous spirit, which had seemed part of her, was still under a cloud.

Uncle Phil was there, too, busy to excess, looking on and giving advice. It was usual for him to be ably seconded by Miss Gerry, whose energy was boundless, and never flagged. But to-day everything seemed different; never before had she been separated from her brothers, not even during their

school days. There was in town a French priest, accomplished and learned—indeed, his bishop had plainly told him that too much learning had made him mad and inclined him to unauthorized views, and as he refused either to retract or to hold his tongue, he was forbidden to celebrate the mass. Debarred this privilege, a priest seems singularly out of place in the world—a goose straying on a turnpike is not more helpless. But there is a silver lining to most clouds, and the priest, yet not a priest, found support and occupation in teaching Colonel Southampton's children; he even taught Gerry music. And she shared the lessons of her brothers in the use of firearms, and fencing—and perhaps to the foils she was somewhat indebted for the beauty, ease and firmness of her poses. Her brothers, who were absurdly fond and proud of her, obeyed all her behests without asking a question, believing that all she did was right with a blind reliance that nothing on earth could disturb. No wonder that her heart was sore.

"Papa," said she plaintively, "I believe I will go out on the rocks. Perhaps, in some of her tacks, I may catch a glimpse of the Arrow. You can send for me when the luncheon is ready. I think I would rather be alone."

The dozen athletic men to whom the latter part of her speech was addressed would, at another time, have been loud in their protestations against ban-

ishment; but they saw that she was very near crying, and not one of them was willing to subject himself to the torture of seeing Miss Gerry weep.

At this part of the bay a good many large bowlders extended far out, and were sufficiently near together for an agile person to step from one to another. And when the tide was low, as now it was, it was easy to reach a range of rocks having considerable elevation; Gerry passed on to the highest; there she tiptoed, and, putting her hands to her face to form a sort of telescope in aid of her vision, tried to catch sight of the barque carrying two passengers very dear to her.

But the Arrow, favored by a stiff breeze, was bounding her way merrily, far out at sea—no glimpse of her could be seen, let Gerry strain her eyes as she might. She did not sigh, but with quick, gasping sobs, hid out of sight behind a miniature fortress, where she almost seemed in a world of her own. By degrees her sobs ceased—they were new acquaintances and felt out of place.

And she looked straight before her, watching the waters of the bay rush out to mingle with the larger waters of the ocean. How illimitable seemed the expanse, and how beautiful. Under the sun's glowing rays the rippling waves glinted with the sheen of polished glass. Three or four whales have ventured inside the mouth of the harbor, and are lazily swimming and throwing up water with the effec-

tiveness of fountains. And how pure, sweet and exhilarating is the salt air. Gerry drinks it in, and feels the quick rebound as from an intoxicating beverage. How alluring seemed the bright waters —they seemed calling to her. How she yearns to lave in them. She has not lived so many years by the sea without knowing how to swim. "Oh! why haven't I got my bathing suit on?" she murmurs, oblivious for the moment that picnics and bathing suits do not go hand in hand. "But I can at least"—she fails to clothe her idea with words, adding—"that will be something." And without more ado, this young lady who has had, as yet, no schooling in any of the restraining influences adverse to her wishes, and never hesitated at any time to destroy the artificial boundaries of common usages, acted on the sudden whim, and soon the pellucid element is rushing over and against the nude feet, and Miss Southampton is entirely given over to blissful sensations. These blissful sensations terminate abruptly.

"Miss Southampton, your father requested me to inform you that the mussels are nearly ready. But I see you are not ready for the mussels," communicated Mr. Smith in chillingly cutting accents.

She gave a violent start, and, oh! a silken hose slipped from her grasp—rested for one moment on the crest of a wavelet—filled itself with air, and sailed out seaward, her mournful gaze following it.

Remorselessly, uncommiseratingly, Mr. Smith watched the disappearance of the erratic stocking, then, without the slightest attempt to conceal his unadmiring sentiments, said:

"I will send Uncle Phil to you. I imagine you have an errand for him. Meanwhile, the mussels and the company, I suppose, are to wait."

Left to herself, Miss Southampton groaned aloud. She felt ill, and doomed; some horrible fate seemed impending. Her childish ears had drunk in with unquestioned faith many a tale told by Uncle Phil of witchcraft—of people possessed—of how some people were given power to cast evil eyes on some other people and compel obedience, even were it to run up a tree like a squirrel, or bark like a dog, or mew like a cat.

And there were still more awful conjurations, when the eyes dropped out, the head turned gray, and the tongue became palsied.

Of course, with riper years, these absurdities were disbelieved. Yet a little leaven remained, a predisposition to superstition. What is superstition? There is no rational way to account for it; yet few there be who have not felt its influence, willingly or unwillingly. It comes, it goes, it is tangible, and it is intangible, and if firmly resisted sneaks away —only to reappear when least expected.

Miss Gerry's imagination was at all times like a willing steed, taking no account of pace or dis-

tance, and no wonder that its wild suggestions of the potentialities should amaze and affright. Who was this Mr. Smith so lately coming en scene? An old friend of her father, certainly; but that friendship was long ago. And there were well-authenticated instances of men who had so coveted power over their fellow-men that they had obtained this power by concessions to evil spirits. She almost shrieked recollecting how strangely his presence had affected her. But supineness had very little to do with her organization. Dread of what appeared akin to the supernatural might occasion temporary weakness, yet it was constitutional to rally quickly and face front, flying the signal, No surrender.

It was certain to her that Mr. Smith had been allowed to go on long enough with his airs of superiority, and that he must be signally rebuked, although he appeared to be so utterly unassailable, and had omitted to take in succinctly that she was a Southampton, while he was only a Smith. It might be difficult to bring him to his bearings; yet it must be done, and without loss of time. Her smooth brow corrugates in deep thought, awaiting the inspiration.

"Some women have hated me; other women have loved me;
But she, who has most wounded me
Has neither loved nor hated me."

There it was in a hand's grasp. She would treat him with the perfect indifference that would irri-

tate a tortoise. She would even feign to forget his name.

The most aggressive of sovereigns is rendered peaceable by an empty military chest, but when it is filled by an unexpected beneficence, he will rush into war and unadvisedly force an engagement with a flying foe for whom he should have built a bridge of gold.

With the package, which Uncle Phil had been dispatched to bring his young lady, he brought a newspaper for the gentlemen, and one was reading aloud to the others when Gerry rejoined them.

Immediately there was an uprising to do her honor. Ten thousand thanks are showered upon her for gracing this festive occasion with her presence. If Mr. Smith looked at her at all, it was in such a modest, unostentatious manner as to escape detection.

"Miss Gerry," said the reader, "I have just finished an account of some serious skirmishes between our troops and the Indians. Shall I repeat it for your behoof?"

"Not for worlds," was the decisive answer.

"Well, as the Queen wills; but here is a bit of news that will interest you: Lieutenant Wood has been brevetted captain for conspicuous bravery, and favored with a furlough. Perhaps he will arrive in time for our ball to-morrow."

Miss Southampton was very demonstrative, clap-

ping her hands in her joy. Her father, glancing at her with approval and sympathy, said: "I always knew there was something in that boy. His father and grandfather fought at Guildford."

In the prosperous days of yore Colonel Southampton's plantation in the Valley of Virginia, adjoined that of Major Wood, the father of the young officer upon whom had been conferred the title, but not the emolument of a centurian; and the most cordial friendship existed between the families. Therefore, when a portion of the army to which Lieutenant Wood belonged was quartered at Bonito, Colonel Southampton received him almost as a son. And Gerry, too, as readily adopted him, so to speak, and treated him much the same as she did her brothers; to the young gentleman's infinite discontent. A very young man is never so much annoyed as when placed in this position. To an elderly man it is very enjoyable; the alternate petting and scolding —being made much of, and candidly depreciated by a charming young girl.

It was only a matter of a few months which had passed since when his troop was ordered away to fight hostile Indians that Lieutenant Wood called to bid Miss Southampton farewell. And to save his life he could not feel grateful for her friendly adieux, and a deal of excellent advice about wearing flannel and generally taking care of his health.

"And, Charley," she added, "of course I wish you

to fight bravely, but don't be rash. It would be a great affliction to me should anything serious happen to you."

Lack-a-day! It was honest, passionate love on one side, and honest, pure friendship on the other.

At this juncture, Uncle Phil, hat in hand, with solemn politeness, expressed the pleasure it gives him "ter denounce ter de Kunnel, Miss Gerry, an' de oder gemplemen, dat de mussels wus about ter be sarved."

A table-cloth had been spread on the well-cleaned grass, and placed on it were delicacies from various climes. Also bottles of the different shapes that indicated the different character of the vintage contained, and glasses, of the regulation size, for drinking the same were gathered too close together to suit the views of a teetotaler. But the waters of that otherwise highly favored country, were brackish, and not adpopulum as a beverage.

To return to Miss Southampton and her vivacious hand-clapping. "Oh, I am so joyful!" she exclaimed. "I feel in the humor to dance a hornpipe on the festive board, represented by a cloth."

"Oh, Miss Gerry! we humbly implore you to wait until our appetites are appeased," cried the hungry gentlemen.

The tendency of that beatific climate produces what is called being "sharp set," and the gentlemen were hastening to assume the various attitudes

that go to show how the human form divine can be crumpled to suit the exigencies of the occasion, when they were imperatively stopped by Miss Southampton, with the order to "fill glasses and drink standing, in honor of Brevet Captain Charles Wood."

This was done with ultra promptness; but it was not enough to satisfy the young lady. "Break glasses!" she cried, smashing hers.

For about a half-second the breaking of wine-glasses was in order. Mr. Smith only placing his carefully down, declaring such wanton destruction clear against his habits. And, furthermore, he confessed himself unable to see in what way the gallant young officer's health and prospects could be advanced by such a sacrifice of drinking vessels.

Miss Gerry darted a furious look at him, notwithstanding she had, as we know, resolved to let him die the chilling death of being left alone. But this Fabian policy was too much for her impatient nature.

"Doubtless," she exclaimed hotly, "the habit of economy is one of the lofty virtues—but don't you think it can be carried to excess, Mr. —er—er—Jones?"

"Smith is my name," he answered deliberately, "and prudent economy is not excessive, Miss—er—er—what is your name, anyhow?"

If Mr. Smith intended this remark as his contri-

bution to improve the hilarity of the company, it was a conspicuous failure.

Miss Southampton's friends were all thorough-paced partisans, and turned frowning brows toward that gentleman, and only the knowledge that he was the guest of Colonel Southampton saved him from being torn to pieces, limb from limb.

Colonel Southampton's face clouded—it troubled him that his friend and his daughter should be at outs. And there would have been an awkward pause had not the quick-witted lady, with her gracious womanhood, repaired the breach she had made—and without making the least concession, or giving up an inch of ground. She slightly inclined her head, and with high-bred courtesy hastened to say: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Smith, for a momentary forgetfulness of the consideration due to my father's guest. But my natural brusqueness, which is of course reprehensible, meets with so much general indulgence that I do not improve."

Having said this much for the credit of her father's house, she felt privileged to add with the ostentatious, tender regret which might have vexed the righteous soul of a saint: "Not knowing Captain Wood, you cannot form an idea of the many high virtues and attributes that cluster around his honored name, and a name so dear to us, therefore you declined the immolation of an empty wine-glass.

But we bear you no ill will. You are freely and fully forgiven."

Some of the company felt very ill afterward in consequence of their efforts to repress smiles. The object of the attack alone remained unmoved—the barb had been well-aimed, and hit squarely, but fell harmless. Gerry looked at him curiously, and by some anomaly, felt inclined toward him. "There is not another man alive," she thought, "whose eyes could meet mine so unflinchingly," and from that hour she could not disguise from herself that his influence strengthened over her daily. It was the inherent admiration a mercurial temperament often has for a hard, reticent nature, so exactly its antithesis. But she had no idea of laying down her arms. The Southamptons had always been a proud people; and she had her full share of that deadly sin which brought ruin on the highest of the angels and eternal punishment on the Son of the Morning.

She seated herself remotely as possible from the quiet, silent man. Just then Uncle Phil approached her and with a beaming face whispered something in her ear. Merely taking time to say "dispensa me," she sprang up, and was whisked away—only a few paces—followed by every eye. A covered basket was opened, and the two heads bent over, viewing its contents with immense delight, and exchanging a few rapid sentences.

The curiosity of the uninitiated rises rampant, and they cry:

"What is it, Miss Gerry? Won't you let us into the agreeable secret, too?"

"It is not a secret," she answered triumphantly, "Uncle Phil says it is a 'tecky.' And you shall see him; and you shall eat him."

"A turkey!" was the surprised exclamations. "Did it fall from the clouds?"

With flourish of trumpets, as it were, Miss Southampton and Uncle Phil together place the dish containing the rare fowl in front of Colonel Southampton.

"Stop, papa," cried Miss Gerry, as the carving knife was deftly raised. "Don't touch him yet—let us admire. You must all pardon my enthusiasm, I never saw a 'tecky' before. Uncle Phil says I did in Virginia. But the sweetest memories fade, and I cannot recall an acquaintance with this species of the winged tribe. Hitherto gallinas only and I have known each other, and you must bear with my exultation."

"But where did it come from?" persisted the gentlemen.

"Do you think it quite good manners," retorted the young lady, "to be so morbidly curious about his history. Possibly—probably, there may be bizarre circumstances in connection with it. But he came to us in a purely commercial way. Uncle Phil

purchased him from a mucharcho, who called upon every saint in the calendar to witness that he came by him honestly—but that is with his conscience! The sum paid was sixteen dollars. A mere nothing when compared with the cost of some dainties the old Romans provided for their guests—just think of the shield of Minerva costing seventy-two thousand dollars. How thankful we ought to feel, papa, that we did not live in those expensive days. Now, cut, and spare not; only divide fair."

Presently there began a decorous clatter of knives and forks, and a good deal of merriment, the principal instigator being Miss Southampton. She was perhaps all the more brilliant and exigent because of the glances of grave surprise directed at intervals toward her from Mr. Smith, who inwardly wondered that this could be the same young person whom a few hours only had elapsed since he —with his own eyes, which he never distrusted— had beheld in a tumult of grief. He condemned such frivolity utterly. Besides, he did not wholly approve the way she grasped the reins of conversation, nor of the dexterous manner in which she handled them. Neither did he sympathize in the unaffected delight manifested by the "arrant numskulls" (Mr. Smith's estimate of the intellectual attainments of those high public officers was erroneous); they were simply enjoying a war of wits with a bright young girl, who could stand up square

and hit out straight. Suddenly she exclaimed: "Oh, papa! there is going to be a storm!"

Engrossed in their mirth, no one had noticed the rapid change in the atmospheric conditions, and that a storm was almost upon them. The "mare's tails" were tossing wildly against the sky-line and the scurrying clouds of dark indigo-blue just edged with copper were quickly massing. A rain-drop fell with a splash against the white cloth, making a damp circle. Others began to patter. Miss Gerry started up, though by no means afraid of a shower, and said laughingly: "There is no time for grace after meat, and Major Henley (to a stalwart infantryman at her side), I'll run you to the Custom House for a gold quarter." And, nothing loth, he set out with her at a clipping pace. The others followed such a felicitous lead. Only Colonel Southampton stayed behind with Mr. Smith to come on more leisurely—he would have preferred keeping company with the youngsters.

CHAPTER V.

THE BAL MILITAIRE.

"You'll find it will be best
To meet with smiles the pleasant glance,
And think all friends are true,
And never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you."

On the morning after the mussel stew Mr. Paul Smith's slumbers are put to flight by sounds of merriment. He could not recollect that such a thing had ever happened to him before.

"That irrepressible girl, of course," he murmurs. But, curious to ascertain "what she was up to" so early in the morning, he rises and withdraws a moiety of the curtain that hangs over the glass door that looks out on the bay—twenty paces distant—and where its headline begins its beautiful sweep against a sandy beach. Since yesterday the appearance of the bay has undergone a change. In the night shoals of sardines have crowded in, and the waters are thick with them. And standing there he sees a sight not intended for his eyes.

A most hilarious couple are out in the waters almost up to their knees, Miss Southampton and Uncle Phil, who, with his bare feet, and his trousers rolled up, seems thoroughly equipped for the

work. With a net attached to a short pole he is scooping up the small fry with all the dexterity and enjoyment of a born fisherman, and emptying his catch into a creel hanging on his arm. Miss Gerry, who is scarcely less well prepared, is bareheaded—her flannel gown securely tucked up, and her feet thrust into a pair of her father's boots. She is springing from place to place, diving her hands among the shining, wriggling, twisting slippery creatures; occasionally she seizes one, and despite its struggles pops it into Uncle Phil's creel with a shout. "Look out, Miss Gerry, chile!" he cautioned, "be keerful! ef y'u steps onto one ob dese warmints down y'u'll go kerwollop." Mentioning such catastrophe seems to bring it on. Down goes the young lady over head and ears.

"Now for a bit of vehement scolding," thought that middle-aged gentleman, looking on. On the contrary, she rises quickly, and shaking her head to get the salt water out of her eyes, bursts into a peal of laughter clear and sweet as silver chimes. Involuntarily Mr. Smith's lips part in a smile, as he said: "Well, she does possess uncommon appreciation of the humorous," and he watches the incongruous but congenial pair with unabated interest until the filling of the creel stops their labor.

"Come, Miss Gerry, chile, dese is plenty. Les go in," said Uncle Phil.

"Let me help you carry the basket," said she, and

with it between them they pass under the shadows of the corridor.

Mr. Smith went back to his bed, but not to resume his interrupted slumbers. The flashing brown eyes seem to pursue him with their merriment. And he feels forced to admit that it is no matter for surprise that his old friend's daughter draws all hearts to her, like steel-filings to a magnet. "She is of the same sort as that hooked-nose fellow from Rome with his veni, vide, vici. I must be wary. I am past the age for such folly."

Some hours later Mr. Smith descends to the corridor to "take a little turn before breakfast" (he has had his cup of coffee and a roll in his bedroom); his constitutional is cut short; he stops to listen to piano chords, struck by a masterly hand, followed by a gush of melody. Gerry is singing an old song he has not heard since he was a boy. Entranced, he listened where he stood—he felt averse to going in among the "usual crowd of idiots." The "idiots" were not there, she was singing to her father only, and presently they came out together. "Come, Smith," said Colonel Southampton, "let's have breakfast. Every morning for an appetizer, instead of absinthe, Gerry sings me an old-time ballad."

Costumed correctly, Colonel Southampton and Mr. Smith are waiting in the parlor for the incoming of Miss Southampton, who presently makes her

appearance bewilderingly dazzling in her evening toilet.

She is neither blonde nor brunette, but of the happy type that can wear all colors. She is now clad in a gown of heavy, blue silk, and its rich folds fall easily into classic outlines, draping with marvelous effect her elastic, graceful figure. Rows of great pearls encircle her beautiful arms and neck.

"Why, Gerry!" exclaimed her father, "you are positively bewitching. She looks like a Greek goddess, don't she, Smith?"

"I never saw a Greek goddess," answered Mr. Smith; "but to a plain man, such as I, a woman always looks best when she's got clothes on all over her."

The so-called Greek goddess gives him a look of imperial disdain, and Colonel Southampton lost no time in saying: "You are out of order, Smith; the evening toilets of ladies are not subject to private interpretation. The mandates of that inexorable dame, Fashion, are not to be evaded, and I would not like to see my Gerry render herself remarkable by wearing a bib. But to her less favored sisters—who really would appear to advantage with clothes on all over them—Fashion's mandates are tyrannous. But come," he continued, placing his daughter's wraps carefully about her, "we had better go. They have a way of detaining things, waiting for my Gerry." With his daughter on his arm he

passed out of the door and nearly collided with a person in the corridor. "Ah! Mr. Hamilton! Good evening. Are you bound for the ball?"

"No," was the answer, "I have come to pass the evening with Mrs. Southampton—reading to her."

"Come on, papa," said Miss Gerry. "Don't stand here talking all night."

The marked aversion in her tone caused Mr. Smith to ask after they had gone by: "Who is that?"

"Well, Hamilton is his name. I really don't know much about him; but Mrs. Southampton has taken an invalid's fancy to him—I scarcely understand why. He strikes me as being a young fellow with very little to recommend him. I suppose, however, that while he will never be of much benefit to himself he will never be of much harm to any one else. Such men never disturb the peace of the world."

The drive was so short that when the vehicle—which was an army ambulance—stopped in front of the illuminated Town Hall Mr. Smith remarked: "We had just as well have walked."

Colonel Southampton laughed.

"Certainly we had just as well have walked, only there were Gerry's satin boots to be considered, as you would have known yourself were you a father."

"Which I am not," answered Mr. Smith testily.

It did seem as if the arrival of Miss Southampton

was of importance, so great a crowd of officers had gathered—all emulous to assist in her descent.

"Gerry," said her father to her, in admonitory tones, "you are forgetting something."

Miss Southampton does not seem particularly pleased at this recall to duty. But at once she turns to Smith, sitting by her side, and says: "What dance shall I save for you?"

"I do not dance," was the answer.

The "will" and the "won't" are sometimes so closely allied in the female breast as scarcely to be separable, hence the answer:

"You can promenade, I suppose, not being lame."

"No, I am not lame," was the composed reply, "and I can promenade with you."

"How charmed I shall be," said Gerry, with a light laugh. And giving a hand to each of the two nearest gallants, she springs to the carpeted sidewalk, and enters the open portal, draped with an American flag.

A "private" without and a "private" within are on duty; not warlike for the nonce, only for the military effect.

Colonel Southampton and Mr. Smith followed just in time to see Miss Southampton disappearing through another flag environed doorway, by which stands another "private" guarding the sacred precincts of the ladies' wraps. These two gentlemen

are taken in charge by another "private" and conducted to the cloak room, from which they emerge very soon, Colonel Southampton saying:

"We will gather up Gerry and go to the ball room, which is up stairs. The supper room is down here."

The gathering up process is not difficult, as quite near to them they hear a tinkling laugh.

"That's Gerry," said her father, piloted by the sound, which leads them to where she is standing by the door of the supper room, surrounded by a bevy of epaulet-wearers, one of whom is pouring Veuve Cliquot into a tumbler she holds in her hand, of the kind called "half-bottle."

A grave surprise was stationary on the countenance of Mr. Smith as he stood counting the tumblers of wine, one, two, three, which went down the young lady's throat.

"Gerry is very prudently fortifying herself against catching cold," nonchalantly remarked her father.

Mr. Smith made no audible reply; his thoughts being best kept to himself.

With a slight inclination of the head to her admirers, like a queen dismissing courtiers, Miss Gerry comes forward. Her right hand is given to her father, and the other she lays lightly on the arm of Smith. Thus doubly escorted she enters

the gala room. At that moment the music from at least two dozen instruments crashes forth.

"See what it is, Smith," said Colonel Southampton, "to possess a handsome daughter. One comes in for part of the honors. And as you do not dance, you had better procure a seat at once, while you may. Gerry will come after you to give you your promenade, which otherwise you might miss, not being conversant with the how and when."

Left to his own devices and the doubtful joy of "looking on," Mr. Smith surveyed the animated scene with dispassionate interest. Everyone looked happy; he alone appeared to have been brought there willy-nilly. He was anything but a shy man; diffidence had never seemed to him a desirable quality. Yet he observed Miss Southampton with surprise bordering on wonderment that so young a girl in so large an assembly should be so self-possessed.

The ball room seemed her natural element. It was easy to see that the brilliancy of this occasion was due to her joyous animation. In the waltz and the quadrille her presence seemed to bring brightness, and especially in the contradanza, when the entire sala was filled with wildering fours, she glided in and out like a sunbeam, with smiles and pleasant words for all. He could now see that she was one of those rarely gifted beings who cannot look or speak, or stir, without waking up and satisfying some vague longing which had lain dormant.

Still, there was no denying that behind all her bonne-camaraderie there was a haughty self-reliance. And the claims of heredity appealed to him as never before—that of all ineffaceable things there was nothing that defied obliteration like the traces of race.

Sitting there, all alone, he was conscious of a regret that he, too, could not dance—it seemed such a pleasant pastime. There was Colonel Southampton, her father, and a younger man than himself, bobbing about with the friskiest.

He had very little knowledge of music, yet his ear detected a change in the measure when the band struck up the "March of the Silver Trumpets." Almost simultaneously Miss Southampton came to him and said: "This is our promenade, Mr. Smith —unless you have changed your mind," she added with a bright smile.

The spell under which she had erstwhile chafed lifted and changed—it was now Mr. Smith who was at the disadvantage; but he pulled himself together to promulgate an appropriate answer. His effort was not happy, and on another occasion would have provoked a withering retort.

"Certainly I will promenade with you. Anything to please the chil—I beg pardon—I mean the ladies."

"No offence," is the smiling answer. "It has been

said that all people are children of differentiated growth."

Anything of chit-chat was very foreign to Mr. Smith's habitude; yet he soon found himself beguiled into the gayest of light conversation. Of course, she forced the running, and skilfully carried him along at a pace he never would have dreamed of. With her small hand resting on his arm, he meandered quite joyously through the immense sala, beautiful in its adornments of pine boughs and bunting. The good taste of the officers who superintended the decorations had mingled the Mexican colors with the Stars and Stripes. The French Tricouleur also had a place in compliment to the newly arrived French consul and his daughter.

It was a surprising circumstance, surprising no one more than himself, that Mr. Smith, beginning to feel himself a part of what he saw, should soon drift into the "We won't go home till morning" sensation, always provided that his present partner would promenade with him "till daylight doth appear."

He was relating to her (his meaning was to flatter, and he hoped it was not laid on with a trowel) that her father had been called the handsomest man in Virginia—and she was very like him. An interruption occurred, Miss Gerry suddenly exclaiming, "Oh! there's Charley," darted away to

meet a tall, fair-haired, young man just coming into the room. Mr. Smith is filled with rage, and growls, "Damn Charley." Somehow he gets into a seat, keeping his eyes fixed on his late partner and the new-comer she is so pleased to see.

The young man's eyes glisten, and the tell-tale flush of love spreads over his face as he grasps the young lady's extended hand. Her face expresses an open, undisguised, unerotic, affectionate interest, which deceived no one, not even the object of it, only excepting one elderly gentleman. Even he would have been quickly set to right had he heard their conversation; but, alas! they were too far off —the acoustics of a ball room are not what they should be—and he could only watch them with an unquiet heart, mentally telling himself that he "knew all along that it wouldn't do;" and to place matters as best for himself he would terminate his visit to-morrow. He sighed; the successful crusade after dollars in which so many years of his life had been passed did not now seem alluring. To do him justice, it had been circumstances, not inborn inclination, which had drawn him into that particular path. It was the old story that had ended—

"The other way—the other way."

He had played gold for coppers, and had become bankrupt. That was long ago, and the remembrance he had by a powerful will relegated to the

background of his memory, and it did not fret him now. But to adventure again, for the second time, when he was old enough to know better, seemed little short of madness. But who is ever old enough to know better? And in this world of ours who has strength of mind to resist and stay back when the silver bell rings and the curtain goes up revealing Arcadia? Insensibly the foot is drawn across the fairy boundary undeterred by the knowledge that the excursion must be short, that inexorably the recall will be sounded, bringing back to sober reality. These journeys are taken without counting the cost —that financial pleasure is reserved for the dreary future. Be sure that payment will be exacted to the last farthing.

"Captain Wood, I am so happy to see you! and I feel so proud of you!" quickly communicated Miss Southampton, her eyes resting with delight on the shoulder-strap—glistening in its bravery of new bullion. The warmth of her friendship annoys the young man.

"Please, Miss Gerry, do not pat me on the head and call me a good boy."

"Which would only express the situation, if I did. Why, I could hardly feel more delighted if it were South or Fred," she explained, using her handkerchief to dust away an imaginary speck on the shoulder ornament.

He winced.

"Pray don't, Miss Gerry—I wish I hadn't got the thing—but—I thought it might please you."

"And so it does, you irritable boy. Cannot every one see how charmed I am?"

He bit his lip, and to change the character of the conversation, for he felt no special interest in knowing, he asked:

"Who is that elderly person, the companion of your late promenade? You must have inflicted some bodily injury on him as you burst away. See how he is glowering at you."

Miss Gerry paused, quite a whole second, before replying:

"That!—he!—well, his name is Smith. He went to William and Mary with papa."

The ice being broken, she becomes fairly confidential, and continues rather faintly: "Charley, it is the strangest thing in the world the way I fancied him at sight. But," a feeling of honor impelled her to tell the whole truth, "he does not fancy me."

"I am delighted to hear it," interpolates Brevet-Captain Wood.

"Yes," she continued, making no effort to soften the unflattering opinion, "he thinks me to be a sort of hybrid—an accentuated tomboy."

"Shall I shoot him?" inquired the young officer.

"Oh, no!" she answered. "I do not wish to overcome his dislike—in that way. And who knows, perhaps in time he may overlook my defects, and

give me credit for the possession of some amiable quality, and I may become less obnoxious to him. At present he rarely looks at me except in a most exasperating way, and snubs me so continually that I am forced to retaliate—or lose my self-respect forever." Her companion looked at her curiously in the effort to detect a smile, denoting a jest. But, no, she was quite serious; and there was a wistful look in her eyes he had never seen in them before. "And, Charley," she added, "it is very disagreeable to feel sure that you could like a person immensely who does not care in the least for you."

"Eminently so," he answered, feeling that in a few short moments he had grown to hate Mr. Smith —a man he had never spoken to.

Of all sentiments love is supposed to be the purest and most refining to the human soul—

"Having no thought of self."

Yet, there is no doubt, it sometimes engenders very hostile emotions.

"Are you not going to dance with me, Miss Gerry?"

"They are going to play a quadrille now, Charley," said she, coaxingly, "and over there sits a lady—and I am sure no one has yet asked her to dance."

"I am not at all surprised," he answered, after an up-and-down look at the lady indicated.

"Charley," she answered in a very pacific tone, "it is not her fault if she is a little old—and a little plain—and a little queerly dressed. With it all, she is a woman, with a woman's instincts. And though her character may be of the highest elevation, and the brilliancy of her mind such as to excite the envy of the angels, she would go home humbled and mortified if no one had asked her to dance. Now, if South and Fred were here," she paused, remembering that though the obedience of those brothers as a rule was beyond praise, yet on this point they had frequently turned restive, protesting boldly that she was stretching her prerogative to the verge of tyranny. And right well she knew with what unanimity the warriors of land and sea abhorred wall-flowers, and not less cruel was the kindness of the civilians toward these flowerets; which might wither and die without a hand extended to ask them to dance. "I cannot even catch papa's eye," she continued, with an injured air, "though I have endeavored to do so. Now, Charley, don't you be disagreeable, too."

"I don't think the ancient party can dance," he demurred.

"So much the more creditable of you to ask her. And," resorting to the debasing influence of flattery, "with you, the best dancer in California; and Major Fitzgerald and I vis-a-vis, we can carry her triumphantly through."

"I don't know her," said poor Charley weakly, making his final protest.

"Do not be simple," she commanded, knowing that she had gained her point; "what are the floor-managers for?" And without loss of time she instructed a gentleman, whose rosette was of the right color, to introduce Captain Wood to that lady sitting over there en solitaire, in the bottle-green merino dress. "And now, Charley, be nice to her, and claim me for the next waltz—the next two. I am engaged of course—but all my engagements are subject to mutations."

The bribe was sufficient; had the lady in bottle-green been Beelzebub's wife, or Beelzebub's daughter the young officer would unhesitatingly have committed himself to her as guide and protector in the quadrille of which she knew nothing. A perilous enterprise, let he who will attempt it. But the young officer was equal to the occasion, and with the smiling face that hides a breaking heart, solicited the lady in question for the honor of a dance.

"I don't care if I do try," she readily assented; "I never did dance, but it looks so easy." Easy? Well, it did prove tolerably easy for her. And when Captain Wood conducted her to a seat, thanking her effusively, he left her in a glow of delight. And not until she reads these pages will she know that for those fleeting moments of ball-room bliss, she was indebted to the watchful, unwearied exertions of

three persons, who good-naturedly took her in charge. The difficulties of the position were augmented that they were dancing á la old California without the aid of a prompter.

I do not state it as a certainty, but as probable, that had Mr. Smith known of Miss Southampton's agency in this matter it would have been something in extenuation of the general condemnation he gave to her conduct for the remainder of the evening, or rather until two a. m., when, according to her invariable custom, she withdrew. No one knew better than herself the value of a timely arrival and a judicious departure.

"To increase your worth
Let yourself be sought."

"No more balls for me," announced Mr. Smith, when they were fairly under way on the homeward drive.

Colonel Southampton made no answer. A casual observer would have thought him given over to admiration of the moon, as she lay by reflection in her white beauty on the deep, still bosom of the bay. And it was Miss Geraldine who replied to Mr. Smith.

"Balls are charming—when you get used to them."

She said this shyly, for she was conscious that he

had purposely not seen the various glances of propitiation with which she had favored him.

As he made no reply, the conversation would have ceased, had not a remark occurred to her with which it was her belief that all the world would be in sympathy.

With a flushing face she said:

"Mr. Smith, did not Brevet-Captain Wood appear to you as the ideal young soldier?"

"He appeared to me the ideal young jack-a-napes," was the rude answer.

"You do not know him!" she cried hotly. A Southampton would at death's door do battle for an absent friend. "There never lived a better mannered, or a better hearted boy than Charley Wood."

"I have not the slightest interest either in his manners or his heart," said Mr. Smith with acrimony.

"I did not reflect," answered Gerry, deeply offended, "that those were qualities which you could neither admire nor understand."

Fortunately, the stoppage of the vehicle caused an adjournment sine die of this little unpleasantness.

Colonel Southampton's undivided attention seemed still given to the moon; he was now looking at her upward swinging in her orbit. It was evidently his fixed intention to have neither act nor part in the hostilities, however much he might

regret them, being a friend to both belligerents.

Miss Gerry did not wait for assistance in her descent, but, making what is called a flying jump, and clearing two good yards, she stood beside the unfurnished flag-staff, around which she threw one bare arm, looking upward to where the flag was not.

For years to come, in dreams, sleeping and waking, how often Paul Smith saw her thus. The tasseled thing, called a rigolette, had fallen off, and the short, scarlet cloak had slipped to her waist. The flooding moonlight enveloped her, destroying color, and lending the effect of pure, insensuous beauty. Mr. Smith did think then that she was the verisemblance of a Greek goddess clinging fast to her altar after it had been despoiled of its rich gifts. He almost started at her clear, flute-like tones, saying, as she came near to her father: "I do not think that I ever feel real, flawless happiness out of office hours—when the flag is down."

"And so," said Smith, "you still remember that you are an American, and love your flag?"

"I think," she answered, simply, "that because of living nearly all my life so much among foreigners that I appreciate my birthright all the more, and feel prouder than Americans usually do that I am an American. I will now say good-night to you, papa. And, Mr. Smith, I wish you good-night."

Both men stood watching her until she disappeared behind the door of her own apartment. That

old Spanish home had no hallway, the doors all opening out on the long corridor.

"Good-night, Smith," said Colonel Southampton; "you had better go to your roost, as I am going to do."

Left to himself, Mr. Smith began to walk up and down the covered promenade; its live-oak floor was dampened by the salt spray. He lighted a cigar, but in his somber meditations it soon went out. "Let me see," he murmured, "how many years have gone by since that girl jilted me for a richer suitor—I had not made my millions then—it was a bad hurt I got. It did seem quite too dreadful for that fair, soft beauty, with her pretty, baby ways, to have an eye to the depth of a man's pocket. I got over the love of her—of course; but something valuable went away from me with it—the ability to perfectly trust another woman. Good God! were it not for that what a heaven is now in view. A man is never too old to make a fool of himself! and since I first looked on this daughter of Southampton's I have loved—no! I have been besotted about her; and in my efforts to save myself from coming a cropper, as would most likely happen, I have—of premeditation, acted toward her like a brute. I believe a grizzly bear would have been more mannerly. But it was of necessity—at—my—time—of—life—I—cannot—stand—another disappointment."

Here he made a mental review of the bearing of

Miss Southampton toward himself since the moment when he saw her writing in the office of the collector of customs. "Cupid's freaks are unaccountable—and some inner sense inclines me to think that she could like me, perhaps become fond of me, were it not for that damned young military puppy."

He was not the only night-walker. The public character of this building rendered its corridor a pass-way free for all, and Mr. Smith saw approaching him the man Hamilton, who enquired, jauntily, as he passed by, "Moon-struck or star-gazing?"

Not at any time could Smith have been called an amiable man, and just now his temper was not at its sweetest, and he replied, roughly, "Go to h—l!" This was a very impolite speech, and, strange to say, seemingly gave no offense, for the gentleman merely smiled, and said softly, as he stepped down from the corridor: "Another Richmond in the field."

"I have no fears of that chap," said Smith, and after a little reflection he added, "nor of any one. I'll stand or fall as I may." He relighted his cigar, and aided by its soothing influence, and—philosophy, which some place their hopes upon to temper the wind to the shorn lamb, brought himself to a feeling, or thought he did, that he "would be able to bear it," no matter what fate might decree. "Yet, I think," was his final conclusion, "that I will leave here to-morrow—that will be safest."

CHAPTER VI.

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

"We are in God's hands, brother."

But he did not leave on the morrow, nor the day after. Colonel Southampton's was a pleasant house to visit. Diversion followed diversion in rapid succession and variety. It was an ideal household with one exception, the non-appearance of Mrs. Southampton.

Uncle Phil was the Major Domo, and superintended the household according to the Virginia regime with an admixture of the taking-life-easy element borrowed from the native Californians; expenses not considered. And Paul Smith often found himself wondering if Colonel Southampton's means kept pace with his outlay. Some instinct told him No, and that a crisis was not far off.

A great poet once made the statement: "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart." Perhaps the great poet did not know, or perhaps he allowed his imagination to run riot untrammeled by facts. One needs to be only moderately well-informed to know, without room for doubt, that kingdoms have been convulsed, and cities ruined for a light heart that beat within a silken bodice—and not worth having.

But there is another love, between man and man, which is rarer, and holier. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." The glory of Thebes rose in the friendship of Pelopidas and Epaminondas, and departed when that friendship was severed by death. Antony mourned over Cæsar's dead body: "He was my friend, faithful and just to me." And inviolable was the love between Pylades and Orestes. So had the warm, friendly heart of Robert Southampton gained its empire over the equally warm but less demonstrative heart of Paul Smith, and he tarried on, resolved that should trouble come he would stand by the side of his friend.

At the commencement of his visit, Mr. Smith each morning made polite enquiries concerning the health of Mrs. Southampton. "Mrs. Southampton is very much of an invalid and seldom leaves her room," was the unvarying answer, let him ask whom he would. This reply was delivered courteously enough; yet the tones were a distinctly implied desire that he should seek to know no more. That she received visitors he knew; for he frequently met Mr. Hamilton either going or coming, always with some remark about "reading to Mrs. Southampton."

Mr. Smith was a gentleman, and willing to be mute, deaf and blind about what did not concern him. But his friendship was of too sincere a nature not to feel deeply concerned about this mystery in

his friend's house. And hoping there might be some way of being "helpful to Robert," he resolved to put some questions to Uncle Phil, and one day, after listening for a long time to discussive reminiscences of Virginia, he asked with apparent carelessness:

"Uncle Phil, what ails Mrs. Southampton?"

An expression of hopeless impenetrability spread over the sable features.

"Dar ain't nuthin' in perticlar de marter wid Miss Frawnces. She's kinder dilikit—dat's all; but she's got narves, an' sometimes worrits orful," here the remembrance of some personal grievance getting the better of discretion, he added, testily: "an' she makes it wery onpleasant fur mos' folkes, me an' Marse Robert in perticler. But, Good Lordy! how is we gwine ter he'p oursefs? We says nuthin', an' keeps outer dar tell times gits good, which ain't tuck place tell yit. But she's dilikit."

"Does Miss Southampton ever try to be of service to her stepmother?" enquired Mr. Smith.

"Shew!" indignantly sniffed Uncle Phil, losing his temper and his little remaining prudence with it; his young lady was the apple of his eye. "Miss Frawnces she des natchully hates Miss Gerry like pison, bekase Miss Gerry, she's young, an' harnsome, an' de pictur ob health. But," he stopped, mortified and petulant, feeling that he was betraying the secrets of his house, "here I is, des like er fetched fule, dat karnt hole his tongue—an' talkin'

'bout dat what ain't no bis'ness ob hisen, an',' mendaciously trying to rehabilitate his statements, "tellin' ontruths; fer de good Lordy in heben knows dat dar ain't nuthin' de marter wid nobody, an' dat Miss Frawnces an' Marse Robert, an' Miss Gerry, an' our young gemplemen—befo' dey went erway—was des as lovin' an' kine as could be. But Miss Frawnces, she is er little dilikit, fer a fac'."

It was now clear to Mr. Smith there was nothing he could do, but in his heart there rose a great tenderness for his old friend, as one on whom the Almighty hand was heavily laid.

"Come, Robert," said Smith, linking his arm within that of Colonel Southampton, "let's take a walk."

Together the two men strolled over the fine, firm sand around the smooth curve of the bay. They had not proceeded far before meeting with—well, he was in the form of a man, and showed a notable desire to appear well under the disadvantages so evident that the different articles of his attire had been contributed at different times by different people. A dress hat, nearly new, was set jauntily on his head, and so tilted on one side that it retained its place only by the force of habit. He was a poor unfortunate with an alienated mind.

"How are you, Mac?" said Colonel Southampton kindly, as they passed him.

"I wonder," said Smith, "if when the world goes

too hard there is not some compensation in the loss of the mind?"

"Good God! no," was the hasty reply. "Anything but that. Not one of us can tell what the future may bring. Prosperity is easy borne, needing no special preparation. But when adversity comes, then is wanted a clear mind to meet it as a man should."

Turning from the bay, they walked on, leaving the town in their rear. The two men were silent. For both of them the look-ahead was fraught with grave awe. It is only the young who with their elastic spirits and buoyant hopes can look far into futurity and see away in the distance the open portals of the shining gates—and fair as a dream, the land beyond. But they will not read the placards by the way, danger signals, warning against forbidden fruits. No, the Dead Sea apples are golden—and the bitter flavor each one must taste for himself, learning the difficult lesson to discern the true from the false.

Smith was filled with admiration as he gazed upon the forest of stately, dark, gloomy oaks; silent sentinels, standing where they had stood for centuries—and by their magnificence defying the ruthless axe. Then they began talking over the old college days; of the hopes and aspirations in which they then indulged.

"You were always a steady chap, Paul," said Colo-

nel Southampton, "carrying plenty of ballast, and have made your mark; while I, wanting the sand-bags, have drifted along with the shifting winds, and have accomplished nothing to be proud of."

"True," was the answer; "I have made money, but that seems a poor life-work—there are no pockets in shrouds. You have at least enjoyed to the full what are called the pleasures of life, which I have never taken time to do. And now, I fear it is too late to overcome old habits; yet, I confess to you, Robert, I would, if I could, feel an interest in that which interests others; also, don't laugh at me, I should dearly love to participate in their amusements. You have no idea how out of place I feel among gay, young people—like a marline-spike in a drawing-room."

"Paul, Paul, dear old boy!" said Colonel Southampton affectionately, "there is not so much in it as you think—everything that glitters is not gold—and there is many a smiling face above a tired, worn-out heart."

Smith thought he heard a sigh, and slipping his arm free, he passed it round his friend's neck in the old boyish way.

"Robert," said he, "I have more money than I can use, or know what to do with—I want you to take some."

Colonel Southampton's face flushed.

"Paul," said he reproachfully, "another man

would not have so insulted me." Seeing his friend's hurt look, he hastened to add, "Don't mind me, Paul—I am always too quick tempered. I thank you for the offer so kindly meant. I have no debts, and I make a good deal of money if I do spend a good deal. While I live I can take care of Mrs. Southampton and Gerry. After me, my sons will, I have no doubt, do their duty."

Then, as if dashing care violently to the winds by an effort of will, his face assumed its rare smile, and he began entertaining Smith with that brilliant flow of conversation for which he had always been so remarkable.

Weeks succeeded weeks, and Paul Smith lingered. And while no one could guess, hidden away under his grave, reserved demeanor—not at all suggestive of spoons—the depth of his passion for Geraldine Southampton, it was there all the same. Yet neither by word nor look had he sought to convey the fact to her.

Do not blame him too much for wasting precious time in considering the pros et cons, whether or not "it would do"—for her sake as well as his own. There was not only the disparity of years, but widely differing as the two poles were their two natures. Of his influence over her he was conscious, but there came an intrusive question: "Would it be permanent?" Of this he would have felt a stronger assurance but for the existence of

Charley Wood. Again the intrusive question makes itself heard: "Is it in the heart of woman to prefer a battered old hulk like me to that handsome, gallant young officer?"—these were honest moments.

About the sex he knew little, and if he had ever heard, he had long ago forgotten:

"Who shall dictate to a woman's fancy, or reduce to rule the wandering inclinations of a woman's heart?"

He did not know that the woman who is true to the instincts of her sex is seldom attracted by the mere comeliness of a man. She looks upon the most regular of profiles with indifference. Even beauty like unto that of Absalom (who was without flaw from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet), she turns from with an unadmiring eye. And her tenderest attentions are oftenest directed toward an object, for no reason on earth that her friends can see, and who are lost in wonder at her perversion of judgment.

The wish to be happy is the natural desire of every human being, and with the exceptions to prove the rule, there is great unanimity in the opinion that happiness is best secured by

> "—the love of man and woman,
> When they love their best, closest, and sweetest."

Of the importance of making judicious selections, much has been said and written by those who ap-

parently understood the subject. Yet the world grows no wiser, and mistakes are continually made.

That "it is better to dwell on a house-top than with a brawling woman" is certain. And it is equally certain that an exceedingly tame woman is never highly prized, and frequently subjected to indignity. But the world is wide, and women are plenty, and like stars differ in glory, and it should not be difficult to find the precise one to suit every fancy.

The proper time to love has also been a theme of discussion. Plato, who had many thoughts on many subjects, and is still allowed to be a deep thinker, thought that "love was best learned late in life."

Mr. Smith, who consistently adhered to his own ideas, did not bother himself about the experiences of others, pleasant or otherwise, and endeavored to work out the problem for himself in his own heart, making of it an odd sort of debatable ground sufficiently disquieting, but as a bait sent from Lucifer for his destruction, the evil suggestion rose: "She might marry me for my money."

"Money is the root of evil," so says the Book of Books, and no one can spend long years absorbed in its accumulation without imbibing something of its evil taint.

Mr. Smith wrestled with the idea, so unworthy of him, and thought he had put it to flight. But there was Gerry's persistent sisterly blandish-

ments toward Captain Wood that tormented him continually. And, so—ah! who can tell when the armies within the human soul are contending, admirably fighting on all sides, what the issue of the Armageddon will be? "Best to give her up! Best to give her up!" said Mr. Smith, slowly, then with the fire of youth he broke out: "By the Lord! I can't."

CHAPTER VII.

TEA DRINKING.

"Golden, or gray,
Tell me, I pray,
What is the light of my luck to-day."

The Custom House in its prevailing characteristic was the reverse of loneliness, yet on one afternoon when Mr. Smith returned from a stroll he had been making—of late he had been rather given to solitary rambles—it seemed unaccountably dull. He mentioned this to Uncle Phil, who was employing himself usefully in sweeping the long corridor.

"Yes," he answered, "it's bekase of Miss Gerry. She's bin gone mor'n er hour, an' when she ain't here I kin'er feel it in de a'r—an' it don't 'pear ter me dat de sun shines de same."

Smith resisted an inclination to ask where she had gone, but voluntarily Uncle Phil gave the information.

"She is, Miss Gerry is, gone ter wisit Doña Disgustin Manyo."

"Doña Augustia Hemeno, you mean," said Smith, who had heard of that beautiful Spanish lady, who, when her countrymen were in arms resisting the United States troops, went to her church

and took a solemn oath that she would not dance again until she could wear a necklace of American ears. The grewsome necklace was never hers, and she had learned to be happy without it.

"Dat's what I said," replied Uncle Phil with dignity. "An' Miss Gerry she thinks lots ob dese Kaliforny folkes, an' dey thinks lots ob her, an' Miss Gerry she lowed dat she mought keep on an' drap in onter Señora Abrigo fer er dish er tea—char, dey call it here. But dese Kaliforny folkes neber wus in Wirginny; an' it ain't fa'r ter suspect too much ob dem. It's mos' time now fer Miss Gerry ter be on her way back; an' ef y'u wus ter wander roun' kinder permiscus it wouldn't 'sprise me none ef y'u was ter hab er chaunce ter fetch her home."

"I believe I will step down to the Washington Hotel and see who is there," said Smith, non-committal about the proposed promiscuous wandering. He turned to walk away. And Uncle Phil resumed his sweeping, which had been suspended, muttering: "Dat ar gempleman, as it 'pears ter me, don't axactly stan' under de persition—but pre-haps it is on de keards fer him ter larn," he chuckled.

In communing with himself as he stepped along Mr. Smith admitted to himself that he not only hoped to meet Miss Southampton, but also hoped for a tete á tete walk with her; though it would be something in the nature of a miracle to find her not surrounded by a posse of "numskulls," as he per-

sistently classed Miss Gerry's admirers, with one solitary exception—himself.

With disdain, he would have repudiated any and all reliances on "luck," the bugbear of weak minds; yet with a hope to be favored by some bon chance he attentively scanned each house that he passed—tiendas and dwellings frankly intermixing—until in the distance he saw a large, adobe house, with wide open door, and windows thrown up. This was unusual with the native Californians, who do not prefer to enjoy al fresco in their houses, and had a suggestion of Gerry. He was not what could be called a brisk walker, yet his steady, even strides soon brought him on even terms with the objective point, and he could see, sitting at one end of a long table, in the middle of the room à la pais, Miss Southampton and a half-dozen other ladies. They were huddled close together, and having tea.

Nearly opposite was a vacant house. All houses in Bonito intended for commercial uses have outside adobe seats, for possible customers to repose upon, also on which the proprietor can repose while waiting for customers. Here Mr. Smith halted; there was no need to go further. So he sat down on the adobe bench, took out a Havana, which he lighted, and began puffing. Such a procedure was too common an occurrence to attract attention. An inland breeze coming straight over from the big live oaks brought upon its accommodating bosom

the tones of the talkers, making their conversation audible.

Listening to the conversation not intended for one is not comme il faut, and sometimes entails unpleasant results. But on this occasion nobody was hurt, and Mr. Smith listened with the greatest enjoyment to the gay babbling sustained principally by Miss Southampton. He had before been struck by the quality of her voice, so clear and sweet, and a habit of dwelling on her vowels gave to her tones the liquid melody of a flute far out at sea.

Their innocent fun, not boisterous, but genuinely amusing, had its effect on him, a man not easily amused. His heart softened to the degree that the sitting of the Land Commissioners at Los Angeles, whose decision would affect his title to large tracts of land, and the business of the line of Australian steamers which he owned, no longer seemed paramount; his mind dwelling with strange insistence on the pleasure of having that bright young daughter of his old friend to sit en permanence at his own board. She had never appeared to him quite so charming. This foregathering with her own sex with such hearty enjoyment was to him a new phase in her character.

Tea was to Mr. Smith an abomination, even as the flesh of the swine to the Israelites; yet he became conscious of an inclination to join the tea-drinkers,

and, diffidence being an unknown quality, he was about to cross over and beg a cup.

But some one was there before him. Señora Vallejo—her son was then in the State Senate—was stopping at the door by which lay her route. She, too, had been attracted by the appearances within. "Buenos tardes, mis amigas."

There was a general uprising. The native Californians are extremely deferential to the aged.

With a quick movement Miss Southampton advances to meet the new-comer, and murmuring "Madre mia," greets her á la pais, pressing her fresh young cheek to the withered old face—even so might that fair Jewish maiden have cherished her ancient king—and leaning on that strong, young arm the old lady comes forward and takes her place at the table, which the others have been so busy in arranging. Miss Gerry brings her tea, and supplies her with the little sweet cakes and other dutiful attention, which age receives with so much pleasure from the hands of youth.

After this interlude the cheerful talk again ripples.

Mr. Smith decides not to intrude, resigning himself to remain for the present where he was, with something of the Peri-outside-the-gate feeling. Presently the clatter of tea-cups ceased to make way for another feature of the entertainment. He dis-

tinctly hears Señora Abrigo's call, "Trae lumbre, Mariquita."

Smith shudders, well knowing what is to follow. His heart sinks and hardens, yet he watches, and listens, and hopes, to see the cigarettes declined by at least one of the company. His hope was fallacious. Not only did Miss Southampton possess herself of a cigarette, but her manner was not unaccustomed. It was easy and business-like, as with educated fingers she rapidly prepared the cigarette for her lips—a manufacturer of cigarettes could hardly have been more deft.

Mr. Smith was stirred to anger, and said mentally: "I'll tell her father! But what would be the use?" he added; "that infatuated gentleman can see no flaw in his idol."

There are certain substances naturally hard and unyielding that on the application of emollients become ductile; but harden again when the favoring conditions are withdrawn. Mr. Smith's gentler feelings did not at once congeal entirely; but they had, so to speak, received a blow between the eyes. And he repeated the same question which he had so often asked himself: "Will it do?"

He held to safe, traditional opinions, and it was contrary to his most fundamental rules for self-government to decide any question of importance by impulse. His reason had all along indicated to him that it were better to occupy the neutral ground

between love and friendship, the position of a quasi-paternal relative. But argue as he would, that position seemed singularly unsatisfying.

The old Adam element is hard to eradicate; and he could not remain insensible to the attractive charm of her unique personality. Her beauty was replete with the animating principle imparted by warm blood and a quick brain. Nor could he repress the desire for her possession. Life would be so cold, so undesirable without her. He pondered for fifty consecutive seconds, then he decided to cross the Rubicon, and boldly ask her to marry him.

Presently he heard Miss Southampton say, "Yo me voy," and it was with feelings of relief that he heard her decline the entreaties to remain longer. "No es posible ahora; es menester que voya á mi casa. Volveré muy pronto. Buenas tardes—hasta luego amigas de mi corazon." How cheerily her adieux sounded.

She was at once joined by Smith.

"Miss Gerry," he said, "under instruction from Uncle Phil, I have been wandering around permiscus for a chaunce to fetch you home."

"I suppose," she answered gayly, "that Uncle Phil entered into all sorts of recognizances that I would keep the peace?"

"Indeed he did not. I am on my own errand, and if I fail there is no shame in going down be-

fore so strong a lance." His tones lowered, and softened miraculously, making every word a caress. "I am going to ask you a plain question."

It is no wonder that Smith's heart should beat exultingly at the bright, beautiful flush that overspread Gerry's face, and that he should have lost his head and spoken as the spirit moved him—only an interruption occurred. Not a band of fierce barbarians as witnessed by young Norval, but a band of gay officers came trooping down the hill from the fort.

At the sight of Miss Southampton they gave a subdued view-hallo, and charged in a body.

Gerry is too happy not to be on good terms with all the world, and greets them pleasantly. Mr. Smith smothers a malediction, and remembers an engagement elsewhere.

After making up his mind to the sticking place, Mr. Smith is not one to "woo like a snail," yet opportunities did not serve, and the most unconventional of men are averse to telling their tales of love in public. The influx of visitors to that popular house was continuous; to pass a half-hour with Miss Gerry was a pleasant divertisement.

Mr. Smith was not a patient gentleman, and it was against his habits to be balked in any of his desires; the waiting policy was to him singularly distasteful. Therefore, if opportunities would not make themselves, he would make them. Throwing

down the newspaper he had been impolitely reading, and unmindful of the presence of the dozen or more officers—army and navy commingled—and, without using one of the many flowers of rhetoric in frequent use by well-bred people to avoid the appearance of being abrupt, he said with a directness that was undoubtedly the offspring of sincerity: "Miss Southampton, I am told that the mackerel have come into the bay in schools, and that it is entertaining to fish for them from the deck of the old McKim. Will you go fishing with me this afternoon?"

"Yes. I will go fishing with you," she answered, raising her brown eyes shyly, and a tender smile came to her lips as she watched the somewhat bulky figure leave the room.

In a moment the fair earth seemed invested with new beauties. Never before had the sunlight flooded the distant mountains across the bay with such glad brightness. Wide open were the gates of Paradise, and within them she was going to enter. But this contemplation was ill-timed, and all too brief.

One of the polished gentlemen—the insignia on his buttons showing that he belonged to the naval service of Uncle Sam—was not without experience, and understood the situation, and after the manner of his kind felt the pangs of envy, which dic-

tated with unwarrantable promptness the following:

"Miss Southampton, I am told that the mackerel have come into the bay in schools, and that it is entertaining to fish for them from the deck of the old McKim. Will you go fishing with me—to-morrow afternoon?"

Miss Gerry's eyes were brilliant with anger, as they rested on the speaker.

"No. I will not go fishing with you any afternoon."

"Sorry," murmured the gentleman plaintively.

The auspicious life of this young girl had affected her manners royally, and without hesitation she rose to announce this audience at an end, feeling impatient to be alone with her happiness.

Her world had been an exceptional one; the rough corners had been rounded and her paths made smooth. And, though living in an atmosphere of adulation, she was perfectly fancy-free until so lately, when she had come under the spell of a nature so hard, strong and unyielding that her own imperious will recognized its suzerain. At first she had raised the standard of revolt, yet it was fighting naked and unarmed against an adversary clothed in steel. No wonder she was beaten at every point, and that she had lain down her arms, conquered. She was without worldly wisdom, and unconscious that a woman has lost some of her

best natural rights when a man can ask the honor of her hand with the hope that has merged into certainty.

The gentlemen thus arbitrarily dismissed, though favorable specimens, it is needless to say, when at a safe distance smiled, laughed.

"Never saw such pluck in a man in my life," said a young lieutenant, fumbling in his pocket for a cigar. "But perhaps that elderly individual knew his grounds, which we of the younger sort frequently do not."

"Right you are," supplemented a pragmatical captain, "and your last remark is replete with philosophy. I had no idea how intellectual you are. We never half appreciated you, mon cher."

"It is my wish," observed another one of these gentlemen, "to express my inner views of the esclandre. I disapprove of any so public demonstrations; they touch me in a tender place. But in this instance the unusual freshness appealed to my better feelings. And but for inviting calamity—the fortitur in re appears to be untempered by the suaviton in modo in that ancient Romeo—I would have enacted the heavy father and said, 'Bless you my children.' I have a feeling somewhere about me that I could have done it extremely well, considering my want of experience in the paternal line."

"I am young, but I, too, have my thoughts," said

a trim subaltern. "I think it a confounded piece of work, look at it how you will. Here is the handsomest woman in California—or anywhere else—perfectly adamant to us good-looking, agreeable, youngish fellows, gobbled at sight by that bad-tempered, uncivil Methuselah."

"Our young one is hard hit," suavely commented a brass-buttoned gentleman, whose locks had taken on a tinge of gray.

"Nothing of the sort; only I know a beautiful woman when I see one," replied the young officer, assuming a rigidity of spine denoting defence, if not offence. "Thank God, I can look on a pretty woman without thinking of the sacrament of matrimony."

"When you are older, my dear young sir," responded the affable senior, "these light afflictions will have lost their gravity, and to fall out of love will be as easy as to fall in. And always there is the consolation, you are one eligible bachelor left."

A gentleman who had hitherto been silent now saw an opening, and, being somewhat of a theatrical turn, raising his arm in a declamatory style, he enunciated: "Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles I. his Cromwell, and Miss Southampton her Smith."

"Don't be a fool," advised the young subaltern, with admirable promptness and decision.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I WILL BE TRUE TO YOU TILL I DIE."

"If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy; for
I fear my soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this succeeds in unknown
fate."

Never in her life had Geraldine Southampton been so silent and quiet as when she walked beside Mr. Smith toward the small boat waiting for them at the pier.

Smith was serious by nature, now he was abnormally so. To tell the truth, he was mentally wondering, "Will it do?" He had wrestled with that question till it had almost assumed the visible shape of a personal enemy—a devil come for his torment.

Of his own feelings he was quite sure; but what of hers? Could this young creature in her heart of hearts love him? Or, if she thought she did now, would she in the future? And to save his life he could not help wishing the gallant young Charley Wood out of the way. "God forgive me!" was his thought; "but I do wish the Indians had killed him." With these reflections, so unsuited to a lover, they reached the pier, and Smith offered his hand to

assist her to descend the steps. Cui bono, when she could go down them blindfold, backward, anyway. She could even spring down with such accuracy of judgment as to reduce the danger of capsizing the boat to a minimum. But such caprices would be looked upon by Mr. Smith with displeasure, and to resist his will did not seem to her possible.

When her foot touched the boat she made for the tiller, and, sitting down, passed the ropes about her waist, smiling.

"I am going to steer," said Mr. Smith.

He did not mean to be uncivil—far from it. Only the chaotic nature of his thoughts so disquieted him that unconsciously his tones were tinctured with a metallic ring, by no means suited to the occasion.

Gerry was no longer smiling. The oarsmen were Kanaka Jack and Uncle Phil. The latter briskly came to the aid of his young lady.

"Set still, Miss Gerry. Rite dar is whar Miss Gerry always sets," he said in tones equally as decided as Mr. Smith's, and far more belligerent, and at the same time, by the dexterous use of his oar, he gave such a lurch to the boat that Mr. Smith was forced to sit quickly down to save himself from dropping over into the water.

This little incident did not encourage cheerful conversation, and few remarks were made until they reached the dismantled McKim. Attached to

her side were stationary steps, to which Kanaka Jack promptly bent his oar to steady the boat. Smith stood up and, placing his arm on the lower step to form a sort of railing—only one person at a time could ascend on the narrow steps—Gerry hung back, saying, "Despues V."

"Gemplemens always goes up sta'r steps fust. Dat's de way dey do in Wirginny," communicated Uncle Phil; his tones expressing displeasure and a certain contempt.

Mr. Smith acknowledged himself instructed, and passed up. Gerry followed light as a bird.

"Is we got ter wait here, or kin we go back?" inquired Uncle Phil, making his meaning clear that he did not wish to linger with his small craft bobbing uneasily around the barnacle-encrusted old sailer."

"You can go back," said Smith, "and return for us when you see a signal."

By reason of Miss Southampton's unprecedented silence, Kanaka Jack's Hawaiian soul was troubled—he considered the ground on which she walked fit for idolatry—and, looking over his shoulder, excitedly expressed himself: Missie Gerry plenty mad. Don't want go fish wid old cuss."

Uncle Phil also was pervaded by sentiments of dissatisfaction, and answered sharply. "Shet y'u mouf, an' keep it shet. What y'u know 'bout white folkes?"

The decks of the old vessel were not new to excursionists. Others had been there before them, and it were easy to find seats had they been inclined. Indeed, two boxes, one labeled butter crackers and the other labeled old Cognac, were suggestively near one to the other; but they were not occupied; and Miss Southampton, who had never known timidity or embarrassment in her life, was now under the dominion of both; and her bright eyes, always so frankly, fearlessly uplifted, now looked downward; while it must be confessed, the attitude of her companion was uncompromisingly cold, and he seemed lost in thought.

But he was not thinking of that other woman, who had dismissed him with so much sang froid, but of this woman here present. He considered her the most incomparable woman in the world. A woman like the flower of the aloe, blooming but once in a century.

Most men recover from a first disappointment—yes, from a first dozen; after which, such disappointments lose their soul-wringing, appetite-destroying character. But the pent-up emotions of this man's heart had not escaped by the easy channels of passing loves. They were yet stored within his breast, and strongly barred, and yet under his control; but, if liberated, who could foretell the result? Would the future be of exceeding happiness, the mere contemplation of which thrilled him from

head to foot? Or would the time come when he would see weariness in her eyes, and a shrinking from his embrace. In such a Pavia as that, all would be lost. Mr. Smith had always entertained a profound sympathy for Othello. Not so much for his hasty jealousy, causing him to murder when he loved, but that he should have been so supremely unfortunate. He knew himself to be but a rough man, and he feared for her happiness with him.

It is only when we are carrying something rare and precious that the difficulties of the road excite apprehension. Would it not be better even now to draw back than to selfishly link his life with hers—her bright life that had never known a care? He felt that he was not worthy of her. "But then who is?" he asked himself, "and I can at least give her an honest man's love—and I cannot give her up."

Almost timidly he glanced at Gerry as she stood holding in her hand some clustered hooks and strips of bright-hued cloth. There seemed an air of dejection about her.

With deliberation he fastened portions of red flannel to his hooks, and, dropping the line over into the water, he made the end fast to the bulwark. Then going to Gerry he said:

"Will you not let me help you with your hooks?"

Reaching the hooks to him, she said shyly:

"It seems very ungenerous to catch three or four

of the poor creatures, all at one time, under the delusion of red flannel."

"I am glad," he replied, "that you have scruples against taking ungenerous advantages. Creatures, other than mackerel, are often deluded to their hurt."

A pause ensued. And they looked into each other's eyes even as two souls that searching one for the other had wandered for ages in the blue empyrean, and having met, pause for a glance of mutual recognition. Alas! if a passing cloud cast its shadow, and they pass on, never to meet again.

Something deterrent seemed to rise up between Gerry and her lover. Invisible hands seemed holding them apart. And they, too, might have separated, each to take a different road, but for an accident.

Accidents determine many things. Many battles —more than the greatest generals would be willing to admit—have been lost and won by an unforeseen occurrence, fortuitous or adverse.

The old McKim had not been left well anchored, and, rocked by both wind and waves, had so shifted her ballast that her decks inclined to seaward almost like the roof of a house. And a sudden lurch occasioned by some submarine disturbance threw Gerry forward, and she would have fallen prone had not the strong arm of Smith interposed. There was hesitation no longer; he clasped her in his

arms and pressed her to his breast. There was silence while you might have counted ten, then her sweet pure lips had lost their virginity.

"What a great, awkward girl I am," said Gerry, blushing crimson, and withdrawing herself from the encircling arms. "I might have knocked you into the bay."

"I should have taken you with me," he answered with the utmost propriety. "Come, my Gerry, let us let the mackerel alone. We will talk." The cognac box and the cracker box were pushed close together and put into immediate use. But Mr. Smith did not talk; he remained strangely silent; yet not strangely, for the hush was universal. A sultriness was in the air, giving the feeling as though one could hear a great distance; the silence was absolute, even the pelicans were silent.

When Gerry and Mr. Smith set forth the sky was cloudless, and the bowlders which jutted out on one side of the bay were revealed in sharp outlines, as if clear-cut with hammer and chisel. Leaving these rocks, the bay began its magnificent curve without a single indentation of the low-lying sand, against which the gentle waves lapped with a soft murmuring pur. Inland lay a stretch of sand, on which pebbles and many-hued shells glint under the glare of the sun like veritable gems. Farther back from the bay slight elevations arise; these are only foot-hills, but they rise higher and higher re-

ceding from the water, until they become spurs of the Coast Range, over which a darkness was slowly gathering.

And had those two infatuated souls only have looked, they would have seen the cloud-masses merge with the blackness of night over the crest of the distant mountains, then to move rapidly in their direction, as if to bring punishment, prompt and severe, on two mortals who on this lower earth dared to feel absolutely happy.

All unconscious that a storm of unusual magnitude was near, or of the passing of time—there are no clocks in paradise—Gerry sat with her head uncovered, her hat had fallen off. The crimson flush had left her cheeks, leaving only a soft, tender pink, and in her drooping eyes there was a world of wistful expectancy. Surely this man of few words would now speak the words she had so longed to hear from him, that he loved her.

But he did not speak; he only looked upon her with an expression, the intensity of which she could not read.

Still silent, and as in absentmindedness, he plucked away her comb, letting her hair fall around her in its rich abundance.

Seeing some red strands in the dark mass, he found voice to say:

"Why, you just escaped being a red-haired lassie."

"Don't you like red hair?" she asked. "And," again the crimson tide swept over neck and brow, "you have not said that you liked me."

"I don't like you," he answered promptly. "I thought you understood, child! But I love you more than my life," a wild joy thrilled through his being, the freshness and richness of her beauty filled him with a passionate delight, and the deep ecstacy of knowing that she was his, and his only. "Oh, Gerry!" he cried, impetuously, "do not be faithless to me. I shall lose all the world if I lose you."

"I will love you till I die—and I will be faithful to you."

"Will you swear it," he demanded, almost roughly.

"Yes," she replied, without a moment's pause.

Impetuously he threw himself on his knees and eagerly, perhaps roughly, pulled her down beside him.

"Let us, here and now, plight our troths before high heaven and the angels—then you dare not escape from me."

She placed her hand within his clasp—her great, brown eyes luminous and solemn—and repeated as dictated by him: "I will be—I am—your true wife forever and forever. So help me God."

"And God witness," he cried aloud, as if in triumph. "I declare myself your husband. And let

the flames of hell be the portion of any who should seek to divide us."

He quivered from the intensity of his feelings. When strongly curbed passions are unbound, set free, there comes a joy that almost kills. He did not recover calmness until she had lifted her sweet young lips for his kiss. The seal of a marriage made in heaven, uniting indestructibly the co-existing mutual love.

Putting his hand in his pocket he brought out a bracelet; it was not a lady's ordinary trinket; but one designed by himself and made of stout links.

"See, Gerry, here are my fetters; will you wear them?"

She extended her wrist, and in truth she was fettered. The bracelet was locked and the key thrown into the deep waters of the bay.

"Get up, darling, and sit beside me," his tones were very tender. "I wish I were more worthy of you. You must forgive my roughness, Gerry. I could not be content with only a mere promise. You cannot imagine the depth of my love for you, and how the presentiment has plagued me that something would come between us. But it is all gone now—quite gone."

And twenty years seemed to have dropped from his age, he seemed so gay. The fond words which had hitherto refused to come were very plentiful now; and it was Gerry who was the silent one.

She answered no words until, with a sudden impulse, she passed her arm around his neck and, laying her delicate cheek on his broad breast, murmured: "I would like to die now, this minute, I am so happy."

"Life never till now seemed to me so worth the living," he answers joyously. "I now have all I care for—all I have longed for. And, oh, Gerry," he confesses, shamefacedly, "I have loved you from the first moment I saw you writing in the office of the collector of customs."

"Did you?" she cries rapturously, and instantly believing him. "And I never dreamed it. I thought you disliked me, and all the time I could not help caring for you—and I felt so humbled, I—oh!—ah!" These exclamations were caused by a crash of thunder, seemingly overhead, and a vivid flash of lightning revealing three or four pelicans, with wild screams flying about and falling whack on the deck. "Oh! we must get back."

This was impossible, even had the small boat belonging to the Custom House been there, which it was not; it could not have lived a moment in the tremendous surf that rolled between them and the shore, where, through the lightning's gleams, could be seen a group of figures excitedly gesticulating. Gerry could recognize her father.

Ah! since the creation, when Adam and Eve brought sin and its burden of sorrow on the fair

earth, which we inhabit only as strangers and pilgrims, no one can say, I am happy, without speedily falling into the hands of a pursuing Nemesis.

With all of life's pleasures it is ever Ave! et vale!

"What a beast I have been," cried Smith, "not to have observed this storm approaching, and got you ashore."

"I am not afraid of the storm," answered Gerry quickly. "It is rather nice to be rained upon, having you here, all by myself, to sit beside me."

Bitterly Smith hurled imprecations and reproaches upon himself while he sheltered her in his arms as well as he could, and together they crouched down by the coils of old cordage, which afforded some slight protection from the winds.

The uproar of the tempest prevented anything like conversation, although Gerry did her best to scream back consolation, in answer to his shouted self-accusings.

Meanwhile the storm increased. The decks were now nearly covered with sea-fowls, unmindful of and not fearing human presence. The rain, which had been in fitful gusts, now descended in torrents with the roar of a cataract. A blaze of lightning so vivid that it seemed to wrap the whole world in a sheet of dazzling flame preceded a crash of thunder loud as the discharge of a thousand cannons. The ship, which had shrieked and moaned like a tortured, living thing, straining at her fas-

tenings, now sprang forward like a liberated captive. She had parted with her anchors, and now in the teeth of the tempest was flying out to the open sea.

Smith's face was white with horror as he looked into Gerry's eyes by the lightning's gleam.

She only smiled. Her head was lying on his breast. She was ready and willing to die with him. She at least could emulate the swans, who, perceiving the great advantage there is in death, die singing with joy.

The ship flew on, on, until nearing the Point at the mouth of the bay, then she was struck by counter gales and hurtled back with force so irresistible that she seemed to wallow like a wounded animal in the white waves, until beached not a stone's throw from the Custom House.

Smith and Gerry were soon got ashore, where, it is safe to say, all the male inhabitants of Bonito were assembled.

Gerry sprang to her father. Her fresh young voice rang cheerily: "Sorry to have frightened you so, papa, but we couldn't help it. Could we—Mr. Smith?"

Colonel Southampton rarely exhibited his deep feelings, but his face convulsed strangely as he gasped: "Thank God! oh, thank God! for giving me back my daughter."

Not until her light feet had made the tour of the

assemblage, with a word, or a smile, or a hand-shake for each, would Gerry go within doors.

All the world loved her, and she loved all the world—especially this night.

"Go, Gerry," said her father, when at last they had got away from the crowd and were safely housed; "get off your wet clothes. Uncle Phil will take you something warm. And you, too, Paul, had better get into dry rigging."

"Well, good night, papa," said Gerry, turning her sparkling face toward him. "And, to you, too, good night—Paul."

The face of each man wore the same, yet not the same, expression of passionate love, as they watched her leaving the room with springing footsteps.

Smith shook hands with Colonel Southampton as he bade him good-night, adding: "Robert, I wish to have some conversation with you to-morrow—to ask you to give me Gerry."

CHAPTER IX.

TROUBLED WATERS.

"Ask God for temperance, that's the appliance
Only which your disease requires."

Gerry had scarcely removed her dripping garments and clad herself in a warm dressing robe when she heard Uncle Phil's voice at the door.

"Open de do', Miss Gerry, an' let me in—'tain't no body 'tall, 'ceptin' y'u Uncle Phil. An' I goter obsarvation ter make. Marse Robert," he continued, after the door had been opened for him, "he tole me ter prepa'r some b'ilin' hot flip, an' tote it inter y'u right here. Wall, fustly, I—but good Lordy, honey, what is de wale ob me tellin' ter y'u howter make flip? Howadzackly, arter I had done made de flip an' I was totin' it ter y'u right erlong down de corridy whar, I seed Marse Challey Wood ercomin,' an' er wavin' 'ter me. Inco'se I hadter stop an' ax what in de created wurld he wanted ter converse 'bout dis time ernight. Wall, Miss Gerry, y'u knows y'use'f dat I neber wus no great han' ter tell er long story. An' he 'splained, an' de marter is dess dis, dem fetched Inguns is riz, an' is up ter dey debilment agin'; quincequoncially, de solger mans is ordered out arter dem quick; an' dey is fixin' as hard

as dey kin ter absquatulate befo' daybroke. An' dat wus what Marse Challey Wood wus er wantin' erlong ob me, ter resist on y'u ercomin' inter de drawin' room, whar he is erwatin' dis blessed minit ter ax y'u howdy befo' he goes arter dem blamed Inguns. An', Miss Gerry, I tell it ter y'u fer a fac', he looked dat peaked an' mizzible—dose Inguns is powerful ambitious erbout er white man's ha'r—dat I 'wised him ter keep ter de off ob ertree, de bigger de better. An' ter raise his sperits I gin him de flip. He drinked it down, an' before de Lord, Miss Gerry, in all my borned days I neber seed flip do no body so little good. But he set himse'f down on er cheer, an' dars whar he is now—ef he ain't gone erway no whar."

He had not gone anywhere, and there is where Gerry found him a few moments later, after a hurried arrangement of her dress.

It was quite evident that the flip had done its work ill, and had not raised his spirits. His face was drawn and almost ghastly; yet Gerry in the exuberance of her happiness failed to see it as he rose to meet her.

With outstretched hands she advanced swiftly, with sparkling eyes, and every feature of her beautiful face glorified by the mighty power of Love's magical influence. She spoke quickly:

"Congratulate me, Charley. I am just the happiest girl in all the world. Don't you wish me

joy?" she asked impatiently, seeing that he hesitated.

This young fellow was suffering tortures. He had stood for hours on the drenched beach, not heeding the fury of the tempest, and a prey to horrible anxiety while Gerry was in danger. There had been one blissful moment when her safety was assured. But the sight of her glowing face coupled with the arrogant satisfaction of "that man Smith," whose countenance wore the pleasing assurance of a man on top and certain of his ability to stay there, smote him to the heart, sharp as a knife.

Henceforth the world, for him, was changed. The one object he so coveted was lost to him, utterly, irretrievably.

The sudden call to arms was very welcome, and he hoped, he prayed that his heart—aching with such sharp pain as to make him, strong man that he was, shudder—would be the billet for the first hostile bullet. But once again he must see her. Once again he must look on her sweet face. "Oh, God!" he moaned, "what are men made for to feel such anguish; to be so besotted about one woman?" There were thousands and thousands of other women in the world, but he wanted only this one.

> "Oh! sweeter far than wealth, than fame, than all,
> Is first and passionate love: it stands alone."

He had seen eyes perhaps as bright, faces perhaps as fair, but about this girl there was some en-

chantment more than her beauty by which all men were bewitched.

Love is a hardy plant; it can exist on very little aliment, or none at all. And like Jonah's gourd it can spring up to maturity, bearing flowers and fruits in a single night. And the unreasoning hope which, in buoyant youth, refuses to be extinguished had found a resting place in the bosom of this young officer. But now he felt that between himself and Gerry had come a material, a determinate change; that the right was no longer his to say to the woman of his choice that he loved her.

Such an avowal he now felt would be an insult to the lady he most delighted to honor.

"Love is a familia; love is a devil;
There is no evil angel but love.
Yet Samson was so tempted, and
He had an excellent strength.
Yet was Solomon so seduced, and
He had a very good wit.
Cupid's shaft is too strong for Hercules' club,
And therefore too much odds for a Spaniard's rapier."

Well, all that was left him was to suffer and die. Yet from her he would avert the most insignificant pang.

"Yes, Miss Gerry, I do wish you joy. God Almighty knows I do."

His very voice was changed, its clear tone was gone—and his words dropped slowly, one by one,

with a hard metallic ring, which would have grated painfully on ears less happy than those of the girl who stood so smilingly before him.

"Yes, Charley," said she, sinking upon a chair and motioning him to another, "Mr. Smith does like me—he has told me so."

Poor Charley was very magnanimous, but he was human, and he could not refrain from the observation:

"Mr. Smith! Why, he is as old as your father."

"I like old men," Gerry replied, with beaming cheerfulness.

"He will tyrannize over you," Charley ventured to say.

"Oh, yes! he will tyrannize over me," assented the smiling Gerry.

"He does not love you half well enough," protested the young man.

Gerry's face clouded, as she honestly admitted her opinion that if the affections of herself and of her betrothed were weighed in the balance her side would be the heaviest. "But," she added, hopefully, her face clearing, "as I shall conform to all his wishes—he is so superior, not at all young and without discretion—I shall, no doubt, become less objectionable, and in time the warmth of his feelings toward me will improve. But it is impossible that he can ever care for me as I care for him."

Brevet-Captain Wood looked at Miss Southamp-

ton in sheer wonder. Prompt as he always had been to perceive and admire her good qualities he had not up to this moment suspected humility to be among the number. And weakness did not belong to her temperament.

"But it all comes," he thought, bitterly, "of her unaccountable infatuation for that strange dark man." And how it could have come about perplexed his honest mind, and caused misgivings about the possible administration of occult powders—there might be such things, he reasoned; the secrets of the profound alchemist are terrible. Also he thought of the theory announced by Baron Reichanback, and Herschel, and Muller, of the mind-controlling-mind power. Perhaps she was hypnotized! If so, the only help could come from God. He was powerless; and he could not even remain near to assist her should the occasion arise when the services of a faithful heart and a strong hand might be of use to her. Obedience is the soldier's creed, and he must go where ordered. The farewell wrench must come, and why prolong the interview?

Bravely the gallant young fellow faced the ordeal. He rose with such calmness as he could command, and said:

"I will not detain you longer, Miss Gerry, and will now say good-night—and good-bye."

He took her hands within his own as they walked together to the door, and, pausing at the thresh-

old, he pressed them gently for a moment, and with drooping head he almost whispered: "May I not—for just once—call you Gerry?"

It is impossible to describe the tender inflexion he gave to her loved name. Then he walked rapidly away, carrying the heaviest burden a human being can bear—a heart wounded nigh unto death.

"Poor boy," murmured Gerry, looking after him with solicitude, "I do hope he may come to no harm from the Indians. I am very fond of him—he is almost like South or Fred."

This farewell scene was not without a witness. Mr. Hamilton had, as was very frequent, been "reading to Mrs. Southampton," and was on the corridor—was it by chance? The expression on his face was very near satanic, as he muttered: "By Jove! it looks as if he had kissed her."

The storm was quite over, and the moon well up, showing her round disc, and illuminating objects with distinctness.

The waters of the bay were still troubled, and rushed shoreward with a seething, hissing sound; while out in the offing could still be heard the loud booming of the wicked waves. Mr. Smith's mind was on none of this as he calmly promenaded the beach under the conviction that he could now safely indulge in pleasurable anticipations of his assured happiness.

Past infelicities were forgotten, or at least

seemed to belong to the petites miséres de la vie humaine. He was so perfectly, so absolutely happy. In fancy he could still feel Gerry's arms clinging about his neck. And in fancy kiss again the sweet, pure lips.

Thus absorbed in his meditations, he did not see Mr. Hamilton approach, and was startled to find some one at his side commenting on the beauty of the night after so rough a storm. "Although," he laughed disagreeably, "there is rather too much light for the adieux of lovers, such as I, by the merest chance, witnessed over there," he nodded toward the Custom House.

Smith, wishing to get rid of the person, and not being at any time what could be called a suave gentleman, said roughly:

"What in h—l are you talking about?"

"Oh! nothing," answered Hamilton lightly, "if it comes your way. But I saw Captain Wood and Miss Southampton execute a very tender parting—he is under marching orders you know."

Jealousy! oh, what a fiend it is! A remorseless, cruel fiend, striking where it loves; and, like the base Judean, throwing a pearl away richer than all his tribe.

A deadly pallor spread over Smith's face, his forehead furrowed with passion, as he faced round, laying a heavy hand on Hamilton's shoulder, and his voice changed into a growl of savage menace.

"Tell me the truth. The plain truth. You had better trifle with the devil."

Internally Mr. Hamilton was amused by the outburst, but he answered, rather deprecatingly:

"I really beg pardon if I have been indiscreet—I had no idea of making trouble. But if you want the truth, there is not a great deal that I can tell. I only saw them a moment as they stood together outside yonder door, and I saw Captain Wood clasp Miss Southampton's hands to his bosom, stoop over —he is a long-limbed fellow—and kiss her."

With a fierce oath, Smith thrust Hamilton from him, and burst away, carried headlong by the impulse to seek the young officer and to kill him. But he checked himself suddenly; his anger had quickly given place to loathing. "What do I want with his blood? He is welcome to her—she is not worth having. Merciful Heavens! are all women base?" He feared they were; but he felt utterly undone as he recommenced his walk by the fretful tide uttering frightful blasphemies. Demons had taken possession, and hours passed before he became conscious of his extravagant actions. He took off his hat, and the cool, dank sea air soothed his hot brain, and he became somewhat calm. He replaced his hat, and, putting up his hands, he felt that his cheeks were damp. "Tears!" he said, "is it possible?" Great sobs now came from his heaving breast, and

the salt tears brought the smart to his bronzed face.

Restlessly he walked on, plunged in gloomy meditations, calculating all probable and improbable chances.

His better self told him that he had condemned Gerry unheard, and perhaps wrongly, because of falsehoods told by an impertinent meddler. A flush of shame swept over his face as he said: "I am not longsuffering, yet I listened to hear Gerry lightly spoken of, and did not resent it. But I did doubt her, and it is only just that I should tell her all. And if she says 'not guilty' I will believe her against the world. And then if she will put her hand in mine and trust to me, what man born of woman shall come between us?" He walked on till the stars faded, and the gray light across the heaving waters told him a new day was breaking, without having lain down to rest.

CHAPTER X.

AN OMEN.

"Dear as you are, if Jove his arm extend,
I can but grieve, unable to defend."

There were other eyes than those of Mr. Smith's that had outwatched the stars. The morning sun found Miss Southampton still up, never having retired to rest.

She was too happy to sleep, and passed the hours, like the hapless Juliet, in chiding the tedium of the time which must elapse before she could with propriety see her Romeo.

The door opened; it was to admit Uncle Phil, carrying a small waiter.

"Here, Miss Gerry, I fotched y'u dis coffee. Drink it down warm, chile—it's comfortin' ter de innerds on er yearly mornin'. An' 'sides"—he stopped in embarrassment. It is not every ambassador that is charged with congratulations. He had a disagreeable message to deliver; and to exonerate himself from any odium attaching to it he began recalling to her remembrance divers circumstances calculated to evince the affectionate nature of his feelings for her—"Miss Gerry, dus y'u, or dus y'u not mind, in Wirginny, when y'u wus little, 'bout all dem bird aigs I fotched y'u—an' when y'u wanted ter

go out inter de rain, which wus onproper, an' I reposed y'u, y'u hollered, I ain't sho' dat y'u dident kick, tell y'u reforced me ter tote y'u out onter my sho'l'er, an' I hilt er umereller ower y'u—an' eber sense Marse Robert he fotched us all here ter Kaliforny, ain't I always been good an' kine ter you?"

"Indeed I have not forgotten one bit of it all, Uncle Phil. You are just worth your weight in gold."

"Inkose, Miss Gerry," he replied, in a mortified tone, "ef I wus ter be sot up oner block ter be sole I wouldn't fotch no little price like er low-down common nigger."

"Oh, dear Uncle Phil," said Gerry, "I did not mean anything of that sort—what a ridiculous idea! I meant to say how much attached to you I am. Don't you know it?"

"Yes, chile, I dus know it," responded Uncle Phil very solemnly, "an' whateber Marse Robert an' de good Lord may see fitten ter do wid ole Phil, I will always be thankful fer two things, dat I was borned in Wirginny, an' wid de Southamptons. But, Miss Gerry, what I fust sot out ter norrate ter y'u, wus ter reliber er message from Miss Frawnces. She's wantin', mighty bad, so she say, ter see y'u up in her repartment immegiately ef not sooner. But, Miss Gerry, I wouldn't be in no powerful hurry 'bout it. An' I wouldn't pay no 'tention ter her remarks 'tall. Me an Marse Robert don't."

Gerry laughed aloud. What was there in Mrs. Southampton, or in any one, to dread on this jocund morning? Nothing could annoy her. She was proof against all the arrows and slings of the most outrageous fortune. She could even defy fate. But what did this young girl know about adverse fate, even by hearsay? From her cradle to the present moment she had been surrounded by those whose best pleasure it had been to strew her pathway with flowers, and to screen from her even an unpleasant sight.

"Well, Uncle Phil," was her smiling answer, "if Mrs. Southampton wishes to see me, I'll make her a visit. It is not often she desires my presence. But what does she want?"

"I carnt tell y'u, Miss Gerry. She fergot ter tell me, an' I fergot ter ax her. But she is in er weawin-way dis mornin', fer er fac'. I dess neber seed her so upsot. An' ef I was y'u, chile, I wouldn't be in no hurry 'bout gwien—I wouldn't keer ef I didn't go 'tall. Miss Frawnces is po'ly in health, but she dess kin discomboberate er rigiment ob solger-mans when she sots her mine dat way."

"Oh, if the interview promises to be breezy," said Gerry, lightly, "I had better have it over."

With a gay laugh, she opened the door, and was just stepping out, when the pet rabbit of some child living near, ran across the corridor.

She started back, turning pale.

Why is it so ominous, that a harmless little rabbit crossing one's path should cause alarm?

It is said that the great Cæsar almost turned back from that last visit to the Roman senate because one of these fateful creatures crossed his path.

"Come back, Miss Gerry! Come back!" screamed Uncle Phil, catching her dress. "Come right back inter y'u repartment, an' stay dar tell de sun goes down."

To admit the truth, Gerry was herself sufficiently alarmed. She had been well instructed by her black nurses, and later by Uncle Phil, about the dire calamities presaged by this portent; only to be evaded by an instantaneous and a backward retreat behind the door last passed, and remaining rearward its lintel until the shadows of evening relieved the embargo.

But if she remained shut up in her room how would she see Mr. Smith; and how would Mr. Smith see her? And to pass the day without seeing him was simply an impossibility. She must see him! But how she did wish that wretched little animal had kept away from the corridor.

"This is the air-drawn dagger"

which no power of ratiocination can strike down—a painted fear that sometimes confronts the stoutest hearts and weakens the strongest nerves.

Our poor Gerry was sorely troubled. The new feeling so strange to one of her temperament had dominated her existence till all power of volition was lost—free agency gone. That he was not worth the affection so freely given, so ungrudgingly surrendered, did not affect the matter at all. It is the nature of some women, and not the worst of them, to love with the touching devotion of a beaten dog.

That Mr. Smith would wish to see her she thought certain—and his was the right to command. And to see him, to use a homely phrase, fire nor water could keep her back; but she shuddered at the impediment reared by the little rabbit, and it was only in half-hearted tones that she commanded:

"Let me go, Uncle Phil! I cannot imprison myself for an old, and perhaps foolish, superstition—let me go, I say."

"Oh, Miss Gerry, chile," he implored, his face ashen, "be 'wised by de ole Uncle Phil. He knows better den y'u dus, my po' little, precious young mistis. 'Tain't no light marter dat critter wus sont ter y'u in warnin', but heart-breakin' 'flictions. Don't go agin ole Uncle Phil dis time, chile. Step backerds inter y'u repartment, my larm"—in the intensity of his feelings he threw himself across the doorway—"Ef y'u go, y'u will have ter tromple on my body!"

Gerry paused a moment—as one will to collect and organize the energies before facing an impend-

ing danger—then she said, brightly as she could, "Why it is only a little jump," and sprang over him.

He rose to follow, with every limb shaking.

"Wall, ef y'u will dar' it, I'll dar' it too. An' what is wisited on y'u will be wisited on me too. O Lord!" he prayed aloud, creeping rather than walking after her, his face drawn into a thousand wrinkles and working convulsively, "O Lord, spar' dat chile. Take it all out on ole Phil—he's er no-'count nigger, an' 't wel sarve him right—but spar' dat chile! She wus borned in Wirginny, an' she is one ob de Southamptons." He stopped short, and, fairly yelling, caught her skirts, detaining her with all his strength. The restless rabbit had again crossed the corridor.

"Go back, chile! go back. Ef y'u go back now y'u mought 'scape some ob it! Oh, go back, Miss Gerry, honey, please go back."

"Let go my dress, Uncle Phil," she said with frightened impatience.

"Oh, chile!" moaned the old man, "I carnt let y'u go—y'u po' young babby! Y'u dat neber was contraried in y'u life—y'u dess don't know what y'u is doin'! Y'u is fotchin' on sech trubble as never wus. Oh, go back, my putty, darlin' young mistis."

The old man's agony was so extreme that it was impossible to look on him unmoved, and willingly Gerry would have passed the day in a dungeon to

afford him relief. She would even have denied herself the luxury of seeing her fiancé; but it did not occur to her that it would be possible for him to be disappointed. And there was the interview with Mrs. Southampton, which she must hurry through, so as not to keep the mogul waiting. Very gently she extricated her skirts, saying, "Please don't worry so, Uncle Phil," and she added ingenuously, "It was a tame rabbit, and perhaps it won't count. You know yourself, there must be a difference."

Uncle Phil shook his head.

"Y'u carnt 'pose on me, Miss Gerry. I telled y'u befo', an' I tells y'u agin, dat critter warn't sont fer nuthin'." He said no more, but loyally followed her, his old eyes filling with tears. Come weal, come woe, he was not only ready and willing to bear his part, but ready and willing to bear the burden of it all. "But it's bitter, black trubble dat's comin'," he said, and in the spirit of the noble Roman who covered his face that he might die decently: "I'll put on my Sunday clothes an' be prepar'd."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WATERS OF MARAH.

"What is it to be false? To lie in watch there, and to
Think on him? To weep 'twixt clock and clock?"

There are some men who, by a strained idea of justice, when they find the ardor of their affections refrigerating toward a lawful spouse, seek to make all the compensations purchasable. If they cannot render unto Cæsar such things as Cæsar claims, they hope to make it up in money's worth.

Mrs. Southampton's own parlor was most luxurious; scattered around in reckless profusion were bric-a-brac; cost no object. The silken couch on which she reclined was sufficiently magnificent for an Oriental princess; and her rich costume negligente with its heavy embroideries would have put bread into the mouths of a poor man's family for a whole year. But ill-health and a repining disposition had scarcely left a trace of the soft beauty, so captivating in her girlhood.

There are invalids who, accepting the dispensation coming from a mysterious but beneficent Power as the discipline required to fit them for the illimitable and glorious hereafter, bear their pains and

deprivations in such a beautiful spirit of meek trust that it is a privilege to come into their presence.

But, per contra, there are other invalids, and it is sad to reflect, how completely wretched are their lives, and that no human love can survive under their peevish exactions.

After a time of patient forbearance, Colonel Southampton came to the conclusion that his wife's "fads" were hopelessly chronic, and that it was her intention never to part with them. The outlook for himself was not pleasant—all comradeship between husband and wife was at an end; but at least he could supply her material wants, real and imaginary, which he did to the fullest extent. Then, naturally, he turned to his daughter for an object to love and to make happy. And to spare her young life from this domestic shadow his authority had been arbitrarily used. He stated distinctly that he "would not have Gerry nagged at;" so her intercourse with her stepmother had been confined to brief and infrequent calls.

The robust health of the young girl Mrs. Southampton considered to be the chiefest of her own many trials. While she, as she frequently averred, never knew what it was to be free from pain, Geraldine never had so much as a headache, was never out of sorts, and always gay, with no more reflection than a bird. And then every one spoiled her to the degree that she was perfectly unbearable. And

what there was to admire in that tomboy she really could not see. There was not an atom of the delicate languor about her which should appeal so irresistibly to the stronger and coarser sex, who had no need for women other than to love and to pet. There was the key of her animosity toward her stepdaughter, whom she hated with the vindictive fury of a weak nature secretly accusing her of having robbed herself of Colonel Southampton's affections. And if she prayed at all it was for vengeance. If she could only hear her husband speak harshly to this pampered favorite—which she instinctively knew would be torture in the highest degree to Geraldine—that would be some compensation for the years of her own unloved life.

As Gerry began to ascend the flight of steps leading to Mrs. Southampton's apartments she felt growing upon her a distressing sense of anxious apprehension. She ascribed it to the uncanny rencontre on the corridor, mentally saying, "I am almost as superstitious as Uncle Phil—of course it is nonsense; but what could that horrid little creature mean by crossing my path—twice?"

It was no new thing to regard a visit to Mrs. Southampton as a bad quarter-of-an-hour, and hitherto she had taken it placidly. But on this day of days, when her heart should have been as light as a leaf on a tree, there seemed something inimical in the air—a chill sensation—a hostile influence

which she could not reason away. She told herself that it "must be purely superficial and transitory, and because of Uncle Phil being so foolish." Then, to counteract these unpleasant emotions, she thought of Smith. A crimson flush of pleasure, not of shame, suffused her face. She felt that they were now indestructibly united—that the sanction of book, candle and bell was only a formula soon to follow—that she must hurry through this distasteful interview, then her father should receive her confidence. Already, she felt sure, Paul Smith had given his.

The happy smile playing over her rosy lips died away as she reached the head of the stairs and stood before the closed door. She gazed at it blankly with a vehement impulse to flee, feeling that some strange danger to her lay within, and separated from her by a thin partition. Yet in what way could that poor creature injure her? Ashamed of her weakness, yet filled with trepidation, she unclosed the door—which moved easily on its well-oiled hinges and gave the customary "good-morning."

"You couldn't shut that door without banging it so as to shake the house?" instantly began the invalid; her querulous voice had deepened distinctively with several shades of acrimony. "But none of this family consider me, or place any stress on my opinions, which would have been greatly to your

advantage, missy. You would have been taught civility, and not allowed such reckless freedom of conduct."

"It can scarcely be said," answered Gerry bluntly, "that I have used much freedom of conduct toward you. Our relations have been singularly unemotional, and on my side, at least, polite. And if your desire to see me this morning was only to expatiate on my demerits, and to deplore the whippings I didn't get, I will have the pleasure to make my adieu." She turned to go, and alas! for her that she suffered herself to be recalled by Mrs. Southampton's excited tones. But, to use a homely phrase, "Needs must when the devil drives;" that's why so much harm is done in the world.

"Stay, I command you to stay! I did not send for you to speak of your habitual impertinence to myself—I am accustomed to that. But when you bring discredit that is reflected on me because, to my sorrow, I am connected with you, I will speak. And, furthermore, I will appeal to your father, whose generous confidence you have abused. It has always been your habit to associate with gentlemen just like one of themselves, participating in their most boisterous pastimes; and your father thinking it not amiss.

"I do not myself think playing a grace-hoop with gentlemen improper. But when it comes to shooting with an Indian bow nearly as tall as yourself—

loading and shooting pistols—hewing and slashing with a broadsword—cutting and thrusting with a rapier—I even believe you know how to use a cutlass. It is almost beyond belief, yet it came to my ears, that while visiting at Mr. Hartnell's ranch, you were out with his sons lassoing cattle, and could hardly be restrained from going out with them on a bear hunt. And lately, another phase, if I may so call it, has been added to your repertoire; and nothing but the most fatuitous blindness could have closed your father's eyes to that which has been so openly evident to every one else. I mean the abominable way you have been running after that man Smith—Titania after Bottom! It seems, though, that the man was reasonably honorable and kept out of your way all he could until yesterday when, under the pretense of mackerel fishing, which is another of your rare accomplishments, you enticed him to go with you on that deserted ship. You had an ally in the storm, and he could not escape from you save by leaping into the bay. Pray, who began the kissing?"

Geraldine Southampton had not taken a seat, but had remained standing, as she listened to the harangue of her stepmother with changing color and a drooping mien, and humbled to the very dust.

Oh! where now was all the pride of her father's race that it should falter and fail and leave her unsupported to the cruelty of some inner feeling, in-

exorable, imperative, which in its rude awakening turned against her with the fury of a tiger?

"Yes," she admitted to herself, her stepmother had "some show of truth, though with exaggeration and rancor."

Like lightning it flashed through her mind how she had ruled her father, hectored her brothers, and domineered over every male creature that came in her way until "the man Smith" appeared; then down went her colors, and wide open flew the gates of the citadel to admit the stranger. Oh! what would her father think of her after the representations which would be made to him by Mrs. Southampton?

To deserve a reproof from him was more than she could bear. The idea of it benumbed and paralyzed her faculties.

Her nature was so innately, so essentially true, that not for an instant did she attempt any denial of the strange, strong influence Paul Smith had exerted over her from their first meeting, and that her conduct had been totally different toward him from what it had ever been to others. Yet she had not dreamed of the possibility of such an interpretation as Mrs. Southampton had placed upon it; and was too crushed and heart-broken to reflect that the odious Hamilton had been at work with his wily statements. Had this occurred to her, what a fiery reaction there would have been. Her unre-

strained indignation would have sent her adversary into strong hysterics, and never victory so complete. But how many ships have gone down close to port, and yielding, as to a necromancer's spell, Gerry burst into passionate tears. Extremity of feeling will sometimes cause strange exhibitions in the strongest natures. There have been few scenes more touching than the scene, when in the long contest over the Charter, Edward I., England's fiercest King, standing face to face with his people in Westminster Hall, burst into sudden and violent tears. And, at times, the mighty Cromwell, with the iron will, would break into weeping. And Achilles, the "bravest of the Greeks," shed tears over the fallen body of Penthesilia, the Amazon queen, fallen in battle.

It is only the weakest of mind and body, impervious to sympathy, that look unmoved on genuine distress.

Mrs. Southampton had learned well her lesson inculcated by Hamilton, and had somewhat bettered the instruction; and knowing the joints in her step-daughter's armor, had struck home. And now it was a feast to her eyes to witness the suffering of the weeping girl who, having nothing to deny, only gasped, in extenuation, "We are—that is—we are contracted to marry."

"Marry!" cried Mrs. Southampton, "depend upon it, he has no such idea. Even the most diffident of

men, and that man Smith, I hear, has nothing of that quality, in their pursuit of wives, prefer to go about it their own way. And the girl who shows a willingness to assist is always a loser. And so long as men are men, they are not expected to imitate the saints, and decline to kiss a good-looking girl—when invited. You may take my word for it, the next thing that man Smith will do will be to pick a quarrel with you, and be off."

Gerry's face had become ghastly. She was no guileless debutantè, though in most things she was as innocent as a child, having lived all her life in the pure atmosphere of a father's and brothers' love. It was her father's wife who had just given her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Now she knew good from evil—but she feared it was all evil. Feeling ill she turned to leave the room, the cruel darts following her. "He'll pick a quarrel with you! He'll pick a quarrel with you!"

Slowly she descended the steps, and the corridor being empty, she stopped, turning her face seaward; for the first time the incoming ocean breeze failed to invigorate her.

Yesterday, and all the days before—she could remember—how she would stand and fill and refill her strong young lungs with the briny aeriform fluid until she could almost fly, she felt so light and glad. But to-day—yesterday seemed so long ago; whole ages seemed to have elapsed—the world had

grown old—or come to an end. "At least," she murmured, "there is nothing left for me if I am not to stand peerless in the eyes of papa, and the other I do so love. With the approval of those two I can present an invulnerable front to all comers. But if they disapprove of me, I can face no one," and she added piteously: "Oh, what have I done. I do not know what to do."

Oh! what a dreadful power lies in an embittered woman's tongue when it is enabled by some favoring chance to wreak its wantonness on a guileless, sensitive nature—and such a nature can suffer incredibly.

Only a little while since and this girl was so happy and proud in her love, and not afraid nor ashamed to make an exhibition of it to all the world. Now this same love humbled her. Mrs. Southampton had made her to see the enormity of tumbling into love at sight—making herself cheap—throwing herself at Smith's head in such a transparent, all-may-read fashion, that she almost loathed herself. "And, perhaps," she reflected, "papa, Mr. Smith, South and Fred will all loathe me too—and they thought me so perfect."

The sun was not long risen and his early beams tinged with gold the crests of the sparkling, leaping waves, and the white spray rushing in played around the stranded hulk of the old McKim. As her eyes rested on the dismantled vessel her heart

beat fast. She could almost mark the exact spot where she and Smith had made their vows. In a rush of feeling, she cried: "He is not false! he will be true! And to my latest day I must ever love him."

A feeling of trust elated her, and she walked straight on to the parlor to await his coming.

He was there awaiting her. Standing by some shelves which had been arranged for her curiosities —curiosities which had been presented to Gerry, and gathered from the four quarters of the globe— and examining what purported to be the shoulder-blade of a missionary devoured by the Fiji islanders. Seemingly intent on this ghastly relic, he did not look up when she entered.

Gerry felt discouraged, but bravely enough, she came and stood by his side.

No man alive could have helped kissing the sweet cheek so shyly and blushingly offered, but he remained silent, and Gerry, rebuffed, drooped her eyes.

"She cannot look me in the face to-day," passed through this man's mind; and his tones were gloomy as he said: "Come, Gerry, sit with me on the sofa. I have something to say to you."

Obediently, she sat beside him, but he seemed in no hurry to have his say.

Timidly she made an effort to entertain him by relating the unlucky omen of the rabbit, and added,

"It does, it really does, as I have always heard, presage some calamity. I couldn't help being startled. And I would have gone right back and remained in my room all day but—I thought, perhaps—you might—wish to see me," bashfully she raised her eyes, enquiringly, with a bright beautiful blush.

Smith was a self-contained man, and gave no outward token of his inward struggle. She had never appeared to him so temptingly lovely, and it would be like death to give her up. But he must give her up if she were not true. There was no way left but to question her. And saying to himself he would believe whatever she would say, he asked abruptly:

"Gerry, did you see Captain Wood after you left me last evening?"

"Yes," she replied, instantly. "His command had received marching orders, and he came to me to say good-bye. You know," she added, simply, "that Charley has been, and is to papa and me almost like South and Fred, and after them, I think he is the nicest boy I ever saw."

Any man not madly in love and madly jealous would have stopped there, knowing there was nothing to fear in her frank liking for the young officer, so frankly expressed, but there have been more than one Othello. A spasm of jealousy seized him, and catching her wrist roughly, he asked, "Did he not kiss you when he took his leave?"

In place of the indignant denial he so hoped for, Gerry burst into tears.

It is all true, was the thought coming into her mind. What Mrs. Southampton said, and he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.

Smith dropped her wrist, as if it burnt him like red-hot iron; his worst fears confirmed.

"So!—Shameless!" he burst out. "With your lips not cold from your vows, and still warm from my kisses, you dared to play the wanton!"

The agony which men sometimes inflict on the beings they love best must work perpetual astonishment in Heaven.

Gerry's tears still flowed. For the second time in her life she experienced the unenviable feeling of being at a deserved disadvantage. How mercilessly she was lashed by the inner consciousness of being too easily won. "He has no respect for me," was her moan. She had no mind to plead with the tender Juliet:

> "Trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true than those
> That have more cunning to be strange."

Ah! no. She wept on. Her tears exasperated him. It is astonishing how brutal a man can be, passionately in love. He would have given his heart's blood, drop by drop, for this girl he was so cruelly wounding.

"Damn the money!" he burst out in uncontroll-

able wrath, "that caused you to feign love for me—a man old as your father, and with so much art that I—poor fool! believed you, while all the time your heart was given to that smooth-faced youngster. Oh! Gerry, Gerry, how could you do so? How could Southampton's daughter so behave?"

In an instant all was changed. With the quickness of galvanic action, Geraldine Southampton sprang to her feet, with uplifted head—every vestige of humiliation gone—her tears had ceased, and her eyes glittering in the fierce wrath aroused, lightning streaks seemed almost to dart from them.

"If I understand you aright," she said, not in the loud, vibrating voice of passion, but in the low, deadly tones used when the duello is á la mort; "if I understand you aright, you say that I, Geraldine Southampton, Colonel Southampton's daughter, because you are rich, because of your money, ran after you," no other than plain words would serve her now, "and tried to catch you—pretended to love you—did, in fact, take you in, while all the time my affections were given to Captain Wood. Here let me say," she continued, "that I were happy if I had loved him, the chivalrous gentleman, the gallant soldier whose manly love would honor a queen! But no, I could care for him only as a very dear, trusted friend; while it has been my miserable fate—for no reason that I can give. Have you ever been otherwise to me than uncivil and rough?

—to love you with so true a love that you are not worthy of it, and cannot even understand."

"Good Heavens, Gerry," he exclaimed, making a motion as if to approach her.

"Keep back!" she commanded. "Recollect your place. Do not insult me with your dastardly excuses. I might forget the restraint imposed on a woman, and give you a blow."

He stood facing her. The mist cleared; and he saw depicted, outwardly and visibly, a truth higher and nobler than he had ever dreamed of; and that he had won a prize richer than he knew, and had thrown it away. "But was it beyond recall?"

"Oh, Gerry," he pleaded, "won't you forgive me? I was a poor, jealous brute."

Tears again filled her eyes, she loved him so well, and would, she well knew, so long as she lived; but it was all over between them now. The pearly drops welled over, and rolled down her cheeks.

"Keep back! Keep back, I say. I am not crying about you—I have hurt myself," she said, dragging at the heavy chain bracelet he had placed on her wrist, until the soft flesh bled.

Smith, seeing the utter uselessness of any attempt to pacify her in her present state of excitement, decided to immediately seek her father—he would not spare himself in his explanations—and implore his powerful aid to propitiate Gerry. But he feared she would not relent. He felt that he had lost her es-

teem, and the manner of losing it carried neither oil nor balm. Feeling very little in love with himself, he slowly walked from the room, and had scarcely reached the corridor, when the boom of a cannon from one of the vessels in the harbor smote his ear. He knew it to be the signal of a bark going to the Sandwich Islands for her passengers ashore to come on board. One of the passengers was already on board. Impecunious and ill, he was making the voyage to stay the symptoms, perhaps destroy them, of a pulmonary disorder. To this person Smith had promised assistance. There being no time to lose, he hailed a boat, and was soon rowing toward the ship.

Gerry, yearning to be alone, started for her own apartment. It did not seem to her that it mattered much what happened—the whole earth was for the moment as if blotted out, obliterated, unmade; but she almost turned to stone at seeing Smith in a rowboat and pulling hard for the vessel already making her first tack to sail out from the harbor.

She saw him reach the ship, and climb up to the deck, and disappear. Immovable as a statue she continued her gaze, she knew not how long, until, as by magic, a fog rolled up and she could see no more. There are moments into which years of ordinary life seem to be compressed, and Gerry, looking far into the future, could see no terminal point but death for the agony she was suffering. Mean-

while all traces of her humiliating grief must be hid from the world. There was nothing left but to cover her bleeding heart with her white hand, and declare she was not hurt.

Du Barry and her compeers might shriek at the scaffold, but the Rohans must die mute.

Let us now see how it had been with Smith. He found the person he went to visit more ill than he had expected, and lost no time in giving the promised assistance, and was condensing in a few words some valuable counsel, when he became aware that the ship was under way. He rushed up on deck only to find that the boats that had brought passengers had all returned to the shore, and that the ship was zigzagging her way out of the harbor.

"Five hundred dollars!" he shouted, "five thousand! to be put ashore."

"Be aisy there, be aisy," said the Irish sailing-master, "be aisy wid ye. I'll fetch a tack and bring her to at Santa Cruz, at the mouth of the harbor, where you can get a boat and be rowed back in a jiffy. But the nozzle of this here sailer is set for Honolulu, and nothing but the will of Providence or the Captain's orders will turn her back. So there is no good of cavorting around."

Smith was greatly annoyed, but in the belief that it could amount only to a short detention, endeavored to restrain himself.

But who does not know how fast and thick on

the Pacific coast a fog can roll in, becoming so dense in a few moments as to make objects invisible at a yard's distance.

When the fog lifted, the vessel was far out at sea. Smith attempted in vain to bribe the captain to return with him to Bonito.

"I can't do it," answered that surly individual. "I am not the owner, and if I act contrary to orders I'll lose my berth—that's all there is about it. And you will just have to become reconciled to our company as far as Hawaii."

Smith vented his feelings in not a few but a good many mouth-filling oaths while being carried toward the Sandwich Islands. And it was scarcely a consolation to him that wind and wave were doing their best for a speedy voyage.

Humanly speaking, it was a cruel fate that separated hearts loving so well. But there is a Providence that marks the sparrow's fall, and whose all-seeing eye saw that not yet were those two strong natures fitted to be welded together.

Great happiness is not bought without a price—deep waters are to pass—rugged hills to climb—thorny paths to tread before the summum bonem, even of this life, can be gained. And the ends we shape for ourselves and the ends shaped for us by Immortal hands are as different as light from darkness, as wide apart as life from death.

CHAPTER XII.

AZRAEL.

"A summer sea and a summer sky
Never a ripple and never a frown,
Never a token of shipwreck night;
What did it matter? The bark went down."

"God help me," murmured Gerry, "I love him yet." She strained her eyes toward the mouth of the harbor, but the fog stood up an impenetrable wall, baffling vision.

She heeded not, heard not, the hasty clatter of footsteps until her name was gasped rather than spoken by Uncle Phil. He was shaking as with an ague, and his eyes almost starting from their sockets with horror—yet, even then, consideration for his young lady was uppermost.

"Don't be skered, Miss Gerry, honey, fer de Lord's sake, don't! 'Tain't nuthin'. Marse Robert, he dess drapped down in er little sorter faintin' fit. 'Taint nuthin'—I 'spec he done ober it now."

"Where? Where is he?" shrieked Gerry.

"In de office, honey. De docters, an' Mr. Hamilton is in dar too—he done fotched 'em. Don't go in dar now, Miss Gerry, chile. Oh! don't—dess wait. Oh, Lordy! Oh, Lordy!" he cried, wringing his hands, and vainly trying to keep pace with Colo-

nel Southampton's daughter, as she almost flew down the corridor. "Oh, oh, oh," he continued, "it will kill dat chile! Oh, Lordy! spar' dat chile, an' take it all out on de ole Phil—he ain't no 'count, nohow—please, good Lordy! take it out on de ole nigger, he's er mean nigger, an' y'u knows y'usef dat she's one ob de Southamptons."

Colonel Southampton was a popular man and the news of his sudden seizure had spread, and about the closed door was a throng of people. A lane was opened to let Gerry pass through.

"Let me in!" she cried imperiously, striking on the door. It was opened only a little way by Hamilton, who said: "Pray go back, Miss Gerry. The doctors are with your father, and they do not wish any one to come in at present. I will send for you the moment he becomes conscious."

She pushed him aside as if he were only a straw in her way. The efforts of the medical men to restore consciousness had failed, and they stood, by a table, in consultation.

The patient lay prone on the India matting, his vest and cravat loosened, his coat-sleeves ripped to bare his arms for the lancet. Oh! to see him thus, the handsome, debonair Colonel Southampton.

With a wild shriek his daughter threw herself on his breast. "Papa! papa!" That agonized cry did more than the doctors' skill to arouse the stricken man. His eyelids unclosed, and his lips moving

slightly, articulated, "Gerry." Stimulants were hastily given, his daughter clinging to him, and pouring forth terms of endearment.

"Compose yourself, Miss Southampton," said one of the physicians, "do not agitate your father, he needs to be kept quiet."

Colonel Southampton, now perfectly conscious, spoke; but it was slowly and with much difficulty. "I wish to be alone with my daughter," and without heeding the remonstrances that were made, he continued in feeble tones: "My time is short—I—want—only—Gerry."

All quitted the room, leaving father and daughter together; only Uncle Phil had hidden in a corner, and, all huddled up, rocked himself back and forth in mute woe.

"Take my hand, Gerry, and try to pay attention to what I have to say."

"Yes, papa," she answered, and by a mighty effort becoming quiet.

"Darling, darling, I have loved you best of all," he murmured, looking upon her with wistful tenderness. "Another will soon take my place in your affections—but, thank God! I leave you in good hands."

"No one can take your place in my affections, papa. You are first, and I would give all the world to keep you."

Again he spoke: "Gerry, I leave some means,

but I can ask no one save you to care for Mrs. Southampton." He said this plaintively, as if it distressed him to impose such a burden on her young life.

"I will care for her, papa," she promised.

"Be gentle and patient with her, Gerry," he pleaded; "she is so helpless."

"I will be gentle and patient with her, papa. I will consult her wishes in preference to my own."

The dying man looked at her gratefully, then his eyes closed, never to open again in this world. The inexorable visitor that comes once to every living creature had come. Gerry kissed the cold lips, which in life had always spoken to her words of love; and repeated: "Yes, papa, I will care for her. I will consult her wishes in preference to my own."

This promise she regarded as a vow made to the dead. God help her! Its fulfilment was to crush her heart and wring her life, and give her to drink daily, as a beverage, from woe's bitterest cup.

When she rose up from her father's dead body a change in her had been wrought. Such a change as a rushing tornado brings in its pitiless sweep over a parterre of gay flowers.

The bright, joyous Geraldine Southampton had forever departed. Even physically the change was utter. A dreadful pallor usurped the brilliant bloom of her cheeks, whose rounded outlines seemed in a moment to have become pinched and haggard.

Her girlhood had passed away; she was now a woman, and no more exempt than her fellows from the burdens of life.

We will pass over the details of the splendid funeral; how harrowing to the daughter, only those who have endured a like ordeal can know. And she, who had hitherto reigned as a princess, was from the moment of her father's death set aside. Mrs. Southampton coming to the front, or rather her aid-de-camp, Hamilton, did, acting, as he said, under Mrs. Southampton's directions.

Colonel Southampton had been buried three weeks. Much of the time had been passed by Mrs. Southampton and Hamilton in consultations, from which Gerry had been excluded. Only Uncle Phil seemed to care for her now; and it was touching the way he mastered his own grief so as not to augment hers. He would sit for hours intently watching her, with his hands clasped over his knees, then suddenly he would break out:

"Don't y'u 'member, Miss Gerry, honey, dem times way back in Wirginny, when y'u wus little, 'bout all dem bird aigs Uncle Phil fotched y'u, an' when y'u wus obstroperlus an' would go out inter de rain, dat it wus Uncle Phil dat toted y'u, an' hilt er umereller ober y'u. An' ter devart y'u I sung y'u chunes, an' played fer y'u on de jews-harp, an' I ain't sho' dat I didn't daunce fer y'u?"

Sometimes she would only raise her eyes to his

mournfully without answer, and when she would to say: "Oh! yes, Uncle Phil, I remember;" almost a grin would spread over his face, and he chuckled: "Tank de good Lordy fer dat much."

"See, Geraldine," said Mrs. Southampton, in a dissatisfied tone, "these bonnets and veils are exactly alike."

"Are they?" was the weary, dreary reply.

"Look for yourself," was the sharp rejoinder. "Both veils are the same length, and each have a hem just eight inches wide."

"Yes," said Gerry, not seeing her way to any other answer.

Mrs. Southampton looked at her stepdaughter contemptuously.

"Excuse me," supplemented Gerry, seeing that her answer had given offence; "but I do not think that I understand."

"Of course you do not," was the spirited rejoinder, "understand the requirements of refined ladies in any situation. But I will explain to you that I, being the widow, should have a veil at least two yards long with a hem not less than twelve inches wide, while yours—you being only the daughter—should be less suggestive of grief."

A spasm of pain passed over Gerry's face, but she answered with pathetic patience: "The veils can be arranged to suit you."

With half-closed eyes Mrs. Southampton surveyed

Gerry keenly. She had not been unobservant of the great change that had come over her high-spirited stepdaughter. She and Hamilton had commented upon it. They could but mark the absence of the springing, elastic step which had given place to slow, listless movements; and the stamp on her face of an unfathomless woe that never lightened. And they both concurred that while, so far, her conduct had been unobtrusive and of discretion, yet its continuance was a subject of grave doubt, Mrs. Southampton frankly stating the family traits: "These Southamptons won't go a step further than they want to go in any direction, and it is unpleasant and dangerous to attempt to force them," and she continued, "to tell you the truth, I am puzzled at this extraordinary docility in Geraldine, and fear that it is too contrary to nature to last. But, dear Mr. Hamilton, you can count on me to further your wishes by all means in my power. You know it is my greatest desire to see Geraldine your wife."

She was honest in this. Hamilton's adroit flattery formed for her the mitigating side of life. Compliments had been plentiful in her youth, but now they were as a dead letter, and no wonder it pleased her fancy, for heart she had none, when sometimes in a confidential, caressing way he would stroke her hair and call her, "My pretty mamma, that I hope is to be." He had so completely dominated her weak nature that the idea of separation from

him was insupportable. And that he should become a member of the family was an object worth scheming for, and the sacrifice of Geraldine's life was not worth consideration, when her wishes and comfort were at stake.

"Geraldine, has it ever occurred to you how we are to live in the future? We will soon have to vacate this house for your father's successor."

"We can rent a small house and live on the means left us by papa until my brothers return," was Gerry's answer.

"Mr. Hamilton says there are no means."

Gerry raised her eyes and looked sternly at her stepmother.

"I do not understand at all the officiousness of that person in our affairs. It began at the time of papa's death. He took the place of older and better esteemed friends. As it was by your direction I submitted—that was no time for unseemly differences between you and me. But it is quite time now for his impertinent interference to cease."

Mrs. Southampton sobbed a little, and said plaintively:

"I never meant, Geraldine, to bring it up against your father, now that he is dead—his wrongs to me. He gave up his life entirely to frivolous amusements, shared by you and your brothers, leaving me, his wife, a neglected invalid. Who has there ever been save only Mr. Hamilton kind-hearted

enough to pay me any attention? And when that great shock came," here she sobbed a little more, "I never could have lived through that ordeal but for the friendly arm he offered me to lean upon. And if the dead can know such things," she piously lifted her eyes to the ceiling, "Colonel Southampton is grateful at this moment for his care of me when no one else, not even you, gave me a thought."

Geraldine was vanquished. She had given her father a promise to be considerate, kind, and gentle to this woman, and truly she had meant to be so, but up to this time perhaps she had not been—she could not say—her anguish had been so cruel; but there must be no more remissness. In tones tremulous with emotion she said:

"I beg your pardon if I have failed in attentions to you. The past few weeks have been so hard, but you shall have no cause for complaint in the future. Papa's last words were of you, and how dare you accuse him of indifference?" she burst out indignantly, "when at such a time your comfort was uppermost in his mind? Did I not then, to give consolation to him, promise to care for you faithfully—to consult your wishes in preference to my own?"

"You promised him this, Geraldine?" asked Mrs. Southampton eagerly.

Gerry bent her head in affirmation, it almost took away her life to talk about her father to this woman. And who can say it were a mercy that no

clairvoyant gift enabled her to read the unbounded satisfaction that now filled the mind of Mrs. Southampton? She saw how easy it would be to rule this haughty stepdaughter, whom she now held in leading strings. The gyves might kill her, but she would never rend them asunder—"trust a Southampton for keeping faith."

"You are mistaken," said Gerry after a long pause, "about papa not leaving sufficient means to provide for our immediate wants. He told me there was sufficient. After I look over his papers I can understand his affairs."

"At my desire Mr. Hamilton has been kind enough to give his attention to my late husband's disordered business. He informs me there were some means, which have been consumed by the recent heavy expenses; and now there is absolutely nothing left."

The miserable feeling of having been foiled by an unworthy foe passed across Gerry's mind, and that there was no alternative, she must begin the battle of life as best she could. It was an appalling outlook that confronted her after the manner in which she had been brought up to work for bread. But she was willing to try, and would have succeeded. Her pride of race would have made her ashamed to be ashamed of any work that was honest.

"You must give me a little time to think," she

answered. "But you can rely upon it, I will do my best. Papa and I have many friends; they will surely assist me in finding something to do."

"Had many friends, you mean. Fortune and friends fly away together. What do you think has become of all your fine friends? Never coming near us in our affliction; not even sending cards of sympathy."

The truth must be stated, Hamilton had denied admittance to all under the plea that Mrs. and Miss Southampton would see no one, being completely overwhelmed with grief. And he had destroyed a bushel of letters addressed to Gerry. He had no scruples. It was necessary to sequestrate Gerry until the plan he had in view had matured to fruition.

Gerry sighed. She had not thought of it before, but it seemed dreadful that no one at all cared for her for herself, and that in losing her father she had lost all. But she answered bravely: "There must be something that I can do to earn a living for us."

Mrs. Southampton sneered. By some mysterious natural law the feebler the nature the more cruel.

"You might earn something of a living for us by singing on the stage, or ballet dancing. I do not deny that you could do one or both well, but I have some regard for Colonel Southampton's name if you, his petted daughter, have none. And I forbid

you, bearing his name, to appear behind the footlights."

Gerry's eyes flashed with something of the old brilliancy.

"You forget I am a Southampton by blood, and that I am not likely to soil the name were I to go behind the footlights to earn your bread and mine. Any calling that is honestly followed can be made respectable. But I can neither sing nor dance now," she added sadly, "though I will immediately see about doing something."

"Geraldine," cried Mrs. Southampton passionately, "you talk like a child. You are perfectly incapable of earning money. And, but for your odious selfishness, and always thinking of what suits you, it is in your power to provide for us both."

"How?"

"Notwithstanding all your ill-treatment of him, Mr. Hamilton is still willing to marry you. Why not consent?"

"A thousand deaths first," was the vehement answer.

Mrs. Southampton began to weep.

"I shall starve! I shall be put out of this house on the high road! It is easy to see what all the promises you made to your dying father will amount to! You gave him, as you say yourself, your solemn promise to consult my wishes. False girl, can nothing wean you from your love of self?"

Gerry looked at her bitterly. How dreadful seemed the torture to pass her life with this woman, but there was no escape; that promise given bound her hand and foot, and she must be patient. She said soothingly: "Have no fear, I will provide for you, if I have to sweep a crossing."

Ridicule from her stepmother in a storm fell over and across and all around the shrinking Gerry.

This was only the opening of the attack which was then commenced, and continued unceasingly. No garrison, however strong, can resist effectively unremitting assaults; fatigue will at length cause the besieged to pause for breath. Then, the assailants rushing in, grasp the colors from hands grown too feeble to hold them and shout, "Victory!"

What wonder then that Gerry in her despair should ask herself, "What did it matter?" At the nadir of misery the heart can suffer not an additional pang.

And so, at this crisis of her life, under sensations morbidly exaggerated, she was led to take the wrong turning.

When the Children of Israel were encamped by the sea, and were sore afraid at the approach of Pharaoh and his hosts, they had Moses to admonish them to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." There was no one to hold Gerry back. Oh! no, she was pushed on, as it were, into the black night, to a black fate. And, ah! it was so sad. She

was totally incapable of making a stand for herself seeing everything in a false light with her vivid imagination, and her generous heart, tender and true; such a temperament can enjoy with exalted rapture, also, it can suffer with an intensity of pain that goads nearly to madness, and impels to such extravagances as less ardent natures are never tempted to commit.

"Well," she cried out at last, "if nothing else will suit you, so be it, if Mr. Hamilton should still so desire after a communication I must make to him."

"Ah, then," said Mrs. Southampton, approvingly, "now you are reasonable, and I will send Mr. Hamilton in to you this moment. And really time is pressing. He says that his father has just died, and he must lose no time in returning to the 'States'," and she skipped from the room in quite a girlish way.

Hamilton well knew that he had no ordinary girl to deal with. But he quite believed in his ability to have his way in the long run, and his manner was assured.

"Mrs. Southampton has informed me that at last you have consented to make me the happiest of men."

"That is false, and you know it," she replied, looking at him steadily. "I will not be responsible for words other than my own. I said that I would not refuse to marry you should you still desire it

after you have heard what I have to tell you. I have no heart to give you now, or ever. It has gone out of my keeping absolutely—you know to whom. Perhaps you also know," she continued in the monotonous tone of one under duress, and who is forced to relate a sorrowful story without faltering, "that he does not care for me. I think he despises me, I was so easily won. Yet my infatuation remains. I would prefer to throw myself under his feet and be trampled to death than to live without him."

"Have you no shame in telling me this?" said Hamilton, flushing darkly.

"None," she answered, "and I have more to tell you. I disgusted him; and he went away and left me, although there was in the sight of heaven a solemn marriage between us. We knelt together on the deck of the old McKim and pronounced vows which I hold to be binding."

"Have you an idea," asked Hamilton, "how such a sentimental ceremony would be regarded by the courts?"

Without noticing his sneering remark, Gerry raised her eyes to his with a look of anxious inquiry. "After this you would not wish to marry me?"

"I would," he answered. "You fancied Smith, I fancy you."

"Man!" she cried impetuously, "for your own

sake reconsider. Disliking—loathing you as I do, what will be your life with me?"

Her passionate appeal recoiled from the obstinate, cold heart of this man like hailstones from an armor of proof.

"I'll risk it," he answered. "Katharine did not at first smile upon Petruchio, but she ended by making him a pattern wife."

"Do not deceive yourself," continued Gerry; her face was wan, and her voice retained not one cadence of its wonted melody. "I said that I would marry you, but I say to you now that I will never, never be your wife. Circumstances—a concatenation of them! may condemn me to a life of falsehood with you. But to my latest breath I will be true to my vows, pronounced to heaven."

Hamilton gave a short, disagreeable laugh, and answered:

"The partner of your vows, as you so feelingly call them, did not seem to attach any particular value to them."

"No," she replied, "he did not, and I do not know what may come of it—what I may have to suffer; but I will be faithful to him till I die. Now you know all," she said, looking at him searchingly; "do you still desire an empty marriage ceremony?"

Hamilton looked down. He would have been a good-looking man but for an expression of hard, material force denoting nothing like firmness, only

obstinacy. He remembered how this girl had scorned him. Is love compatible with hate? He thought it was. At any rate, he had not the magnanimity now she was in his power to give her up and to allow her to depart out of his life. Also there was another feeling, animosity to Smith, to gratify. His had been the hand to set the ball in motion which had caused the trouble between Geraldine Southampton and her lover, and now were he to go away and let matters take their natural course, the two he had been at so much pains to separate would again come together. He hated Smith. Some animals are born to fight—and so are some men. And, come what might, Smith should never have her. Slowly, after some reflection, he looked up and answered:

"For reasons of my own, I do. I will take you on your own terms."

She answered calmly, a breaking heart never rants:

"Well, I have no more to say. Make what arrangements you choose with Mrs. Southampton. I promise obedience—so far as I have stated."

She almost tottered as she left the room. No one was in the corridor. She stopped, and, clutching the hand-rail, she stood panting as if her breath were leaving her.

As if in mockery of her grief the sun was at his brightest and best, flooding the world with glorious

radiance. And across the bay the distant mountains, touched by a magic brush, had taken on the most gorgeous pigments. The restless wavelets, pure white, sparkled and danced. Even the lethargic fish disported themselves in frolic, bending their flexible bodies into hoops, and merrily tumbling over and over. The graceful gulls, with outstretched wings, were circling round and round until with a sudden scoop they darted downward to pounce upon the unsuspecting minnows, and, rising, they would utter shrill screams as their prey was snatched from them by the larger sort of gulls that subsist by robbery. Gerry, to shut out the sight, pressed her hands to her eyes, and her swelling heart asked the question: "Oh, why of all others am I so miserable?" That question has been asked many a time and oft, of earth and sky—of God and man, and no answer has come out of the mysterious silence. Not till we have climbed the Mountain of Expiation and purified, not hardened by suffering will God speak, and His righteous wisdom be made clear as the radiance of noonday.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IRON COLLAR.

"But, I remember, now I am in this earthy world;
When to do harm is often laudable: to do good,
Sometimes accounted dangerous folly."

There are times when the very air is surcharged with coming woe, and Uncle Phil, unhappy and depressed more than usual, wandered restlessly up and down the corridor.

In vain he beseeched: "Miss Gerry, chile, open de do'." In vain he called upon her "ter 'member 'bout dem bird aigs, an' de umerreller hilt ober her when she wus little an' obstroperlus, in Wirginny." The closed door opened not; yet instinctively he hovered near like a parent bird watching its threatened nest. He tried to reassure himself, repeating over and over: "Nuthin' mo' kin happen," but no consolation came, and unceasingly he continued his weary beat. The long day dragged to a close, the shadows of evening fell, and, planting himself near Gerry's door, he muttered: "I won't go erway widout seein' dat chile, ef I haster stan' here all nite."

Presently Mr. Hamilton came, and ordered him to light the lamps in the parlor. Of late this duty had been neglected, no illumination being required

in that deserted room. Uncle Phil obeyed, muttering discontentedly: "What's dis fer?"

One or two persons came whom he watched narrowly, feeling their coming denoted no good, and he almost refused to believe the evidence of his eyes, when Mrs. Southampton made her appearance in a white dress, leaning on Mr. Hamilton's arm. After seating her, he walked directly to Miss Southampton's apartment; Uncle Phil following, it was instinct, which is higher and holier—being heaven sent—than reason with its labored processes to adduce the truth, that told him Gerry was in danger; and nothing but death could now keep him away from her.

Mr. Hamilton tapped on the door, saying something in a low voice. Gerry at once came forth. Hamilton started at her appearance. She was clothed in the deepest black. In place of a bridal veil her draperies of heavy crape fell in somber folds.

Awe-struck in despite of himself, Hamilton asked:

"Why do you not wear a white dress?"

"Why should I not wear mourning?" she asked. Then pleadingly—as the drowning catch at a straw—she raised her eyes to his to make one more, the last, appeal against a fate more bitter than death: "It is not too late yet, and I implore you to have mercy on yourself, if you have none for me. Aban-

don this worse than idle, this unholy make-believe."

"You are talking nonsense," he replied coldly. "Take my arm."

"I do not wish to touch you," she said, "I can walk by your side. On your head fall the sin of this."

In the confusion of his mind Uncle Phil had left unclosed the shutters, and when Gerry took her place near the chaplain, resident of the fort, her eyes fastened with strange insistence on a group of Spanish boys looking in at the window, and without volition she became absorbed in the necessity of counting them. Sometimes when the mind is tottering, in danger of ruin, a merciful Providence interposes with a mental lethargy.

She heard the chaplain's voice say: "I require and charge you both, as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why you may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it" but it was as a voice in the distance, and without meaning; but she must count those Spanish boys—her life, her reason, depended on it. But it was so hard to count them. In her frantic efforts to enumerate she even paraphrased "Tom Brown and his little Indian boys;" one little Spanish boy, two little Spanish boys, three little Spanish boys; but there were more of them, and she had lost her count and must begin again. Confusedly, she recommenced,

"One little Spaniard, two little Spaniards." "Why don't you bow your head?" whispered Hamilton. She looked at him in a bewildered way; but turned again to the necessity of counting the Spanish boys. There seemed to be more of them than ever; yet she must count them—it was so difficult—she was almost in despair. The chaplain's voice now ceased, and her stepmother stood before her. She recognized Mrs. Southampton, and this knowledge gave her pleasure, as it proved to her that she had not become demented, as she feared she had. Quietly she submitted to Mrs. Southampton's kiss, but her words, "I congratulate you, Mrs. Hamilton," dispelled the semi-trance which had enchained her faculties. Then, realizing the nature of the awful sacrilege she had committed, without a word, without a groan, she reeled and fell heavily on the floor.

Under the lamp-light her features looked white and dead, and so like her father's that Mrs. Southampton, filled with remorse, shrieked: "She is dead, and 'tis I who have killed her!" and went into violent hysterics.

The chaplain and his assistant, saying something about "sending a physician," hastily withdrew, and Hamilton rushed out for help.

Poor Uncle Phil, raising the insensible body of Gerry into his faithful arms, bore her without, and, laying her prone on the cool night sand, knelt beside her, and, clasping his aged hands, he prayed the "ef-

fectual, fervent prayer," that rises to the throne of God and is always answered in His own good time and way. "Oh, Lordy! Oh, Lordy! hab mussy on dis chile. She ain't done nuthin', an' she is one ob de Southamptons. Wisit it all on ole Phil, but spa'r dis chile," words failing him, he repeated: "Oh, Lordy! Oh, Lordy!" wringing his hands.

The pure salt breeze soon did its work, and, Gerry opening her eyes sat up. The shrieks of her stepmother were filling the air all around; and, recalled to duty, Gerry said: "Come, Uncle Phil, we must go to her."

And tenderly all through the night she ministered to the agonized, shrieking woman, vainly attempting to soothe her; but not until morning did those frightful shrieks cease, from exhaustion, and she sank into a troubled sleep. When she awakened, it was evident her feeble life had received its deathblow.

When the final hour comes it is an honest one—illusions fade, deceptions are useless. As in a glass the deeds done in the body pass in review. Clearly this woman now saw that by indolence and selfishness she had wrecked her own life, and, worse still, how wretchedly she had wronged this daughter of the husband who had submitted to her many exactions without a harsh word. "Oh! how can I meet him?" she moaned. "Geraldine! oh, Geraldine, won't you forgive me—it might help me per-

haps, if anything can help me—where I am going?"

Gerry was silent. Her compact with her father had in effect given to this woman her bond for a pound of flesh, which had been demanded, and rendered. Did not her lacerated, bleeding heart still feel the torture of the merciless knife? No, she could not say, truly, that she forgave her, but she spoke to her gently, saying: "Try to sleep."

"I shall soon sleep," said the wretched woman, writhing in her agony, "and never wake. Oh! won't you forgive me, Geraldine—will Robert's daughter let me die unforgiven?"

There was resistless power in that loved name. Her father had forgiven this helpless creature, and she must.

"Yes," she answered briefly, "I forgive you."

With this assurance the dying woman reached out for Gerry's hand, and, clinging to it, passed to eternity.

Why many people are born in the world would be a subject of grave doubt were we not confronted by the ensample of Pharaoh. The grand designs of the Creator are far removed from human understanding; we can only say what is, is right.

There is a germ of superstition in all strong natures. Such natures will struggle, fight against adverse circumstances until the feeling comes that these adversities are brought on by the resistless

sweep of Destiny—that Birnan Wood has come to Dunsinane.

"They have tied me to a stake, I cannot fly."

Then opposition ceases, and they with dumb patience await the passing of the storm, knowing that in the natural order of things, after the night there will be morning.

Gerry felt herself to be in the toils, and without means to extricate herself; but there would be relief somehow when her brothers returned, meanwhile she must "dree her weird."

She listened without remonstrance to Hamilton's directions to make preparations for leaving California, the land of all others so dear to her.

"Yes," he said, "there is no need for a longer stay, now we have buried the old girl."

"I will not allow you," replied Gerry, in low distinct tones, "to use such terms in speaking of the lady who had the honor of being my father's wife."

"How are you going to prevent it," he asked with a wicked sneer, "if such should be my pleasure?"

"If you repeat it," she answered, in the same low tone, "I shall chastise you."

Hamilton glanced at her with an ugly expression. There was no flush on her face, hardly defiance, but so much steady resolution that involuntarily he glanced at her well-formed hands, and rounded

arms, denoting the strength which always accompanies perfect symmetry.

"My bonny bride is particularly suave of speech," he observed with a forced laugh.

"I am no bonny bride," she answered quickly, "and you would do well for yourself to leave me here. I can provide for myself and Uncle Phil," an expression of loathing crossed her face. "The money you stole from my dead father you can keep —were it millions, it would be a small price to pay for my freedom."

A dark flush mantled his cheek. His was a cold temperament, scarcely warmer than that of a fish; and it may be truly said that in this affair he had acted without counting the cost of what now promised to be an expensive fancy. Previous to the meeting with Colonel Southampton's daughter he would merely have smiled at the idea of woman's love affecting his life. But her gay, brilliant beauty, her musical voice, her clear ringing laugh, attracted him. And then what charm was there in her frank unrestrained manner—to others. To him, when they first met, she had shown dislike and scorn. There is a noble gem which pales at the approach of poison; also there are some beings gifted or cursed with such a high-wrought nervous organization as to involuntarily recoil from an inimical presence. The wound she had inflicted on his self-

love stirred within him deeper depths than did his admiration for her.

It was unworthy of him, as it is of any man, to war against a woman—she was created the weaker vessel and dependent on man for her protection—yet in his pursuit of the dual object, revenge and possession, he never paused, but hurried over the miry ground without asking himself what he would do with the bright, beautiful bird when caught. She was soaring high in the heavens, her jingling bells and flowing jesses were far above his reach until an untoward earthward swoop placed her in the fowler's hands.

That she would beat her wings against her cage and struggle against captivity he expected; but this bitter hostility, which he now saw would be as implacable as the grave, almost terrified him.

Still the victory was his! He had yet to learn that some victories are more disastrous than the most inglorious defeat, and there was decision in his voice as he replied:

"No, notwithstanding the unusual amenities of our new life, I do not choose to give you up, or let you out of my sight, as you seem most anxious for. Are you meditating the coup of a divorce," he asked insolently, "to let that fellow Smith in?"

A moment passed before Gerry answered. In many things she had the pure innocence of a child, and this avenue of escape was one she had never

dreamed of, and when it was presented to her mind there was a terrible temptation to free herself, but it quickly passed—she was her father's daughter, and sister to South and Fred, and she dared not drag their honorable name into a divorce court—freedom for her could not come this way. But it was incumbent on her to make a stinging reply.

"You are gratuitously impertinent. Did I not tell you that Mr. Smith went away to avoid me, and is it likely that he would care for me now after my disgraceful entanglement with you? He does not want me."

"Upon my word!" said Hamilton, his torpid blood boiling. "You are candid enough. It seems then that my honor lies wholly in Smith's indifference, not in your virtue."

"Silence! Your honor, as you call it, is safe enough, connected as it is with the name of Southampton. But for that," she burst out passionately, "there is no wickedness I would not perpetrate to be revenged on you. You have blighted my life! Whatever pleasant thing the future might have brought me after the loss of my father you have destroyed. And I tell you now that my hatred of you is of the kind that will never sleep, and never know variableness or shadow of change. Of my own will I will never speak to you, and I will close my eyes rather than look upon you. Now take me, or leave me, as you choose."

"You will go with me," he replied with sullen defiance, "but old Phil shall be left here."

"Uncle Phil shall go with me. I will not be separated from him," she said imperiously.

Hamilton left the room muttering: "Things do not look flowery, but perhaps they will go smoother when I get her away from this infernal country, where men are plenty and women are few, and worshiped like angels. In the state of —— she will find her level."

CHAPTER XIV.

SORROW'S CROWN OF SORROWS.

"Comforts in Heaven, and we are on the earth,
Where nothing lives but crosses, cares and grief."

"There is where I was born," said Hamilton, indicating a large, old-fashioned brick dwelling at the terminus of a winding avenue, bordered by handsome pine trees.

Gerry was silent; she never raised her eyes.

"Have you made up your mind to be haughty and disagreeable to my relations?" he asked angrily. "I tell you it won't do."

Still there were neither word nor sign; he had as well have spoken to a lay-figure. The carriage had now stopped.

"Get out," he said sharply, "unless you prefer to be driven to the stables."

Without a word Gerry descended, not choosing to see the hand he extended to assist her, and followed him into the house, and into the parlor, where some persons were seated, to whom she was introduced by Hamilton, who said: "Here is my mother. And my sister-in-law, my brother Edward, and their children."

There was a general rising, with a movement of

welcome toward Gerry, which her manner checked at once. She merely raised her eyes, and for a very short moment glanced at the group en bloc, with the slightest possible bend of her head. Her lips then opened, but it was only to say: "I wish to be shown to a room."

"Supper will soon be ready," said Hamilton's mother, after an embarrassing pause.

Without noticing this observation, Gerry repeated: "I wish to be shown to a room."

There was another embarrassing pause, and a servant was called to act as a guide to Gerry, who quitted the room without saying another word.

In the silence that followed Hamilton felt dejected and uncomfortable.

By a course of scheming, and unworthy conduct, and trampling on every manly instinct, he had succeeded in joining this girl's life with his, but the result had only gone to show the sinfulness of sinning. In effect they were separated by a gulf so wide and deep that it never could be bridged. Yet there was a sort of savage triumph in the reflection he had separated her from Smith. He would prefer to see her dead than in the possession of that man. And, strange as it may seem, Gerry's firm, simple good-faith had won his admiration.

The first to speak was Hamilton's brother Edward, and if his words were offensive, his tones were still more so.

"Our new relation seems to be a very affable person."

"Go to the devil," said Hamilton angrily.

"What's the matter, old man, that you are in such a bad humor? Knowing, as we all did, that you were a fish which would require a deal of catching, the news of your marriage was a surprise to us—an agreeable surprise—and we were prepared to lavish upon your bride the wealth of our united affection. Pardon me for saying this effort on our part has the appearance of being superfluous. Evidently we have not carried the heart of the newest Mrs. Hamilton by storm." This brother of Hamilton had the reputation, and was proud of it, of being able to make himself as comprehensively disagreeable as was humanly possible.

The angry flush did not leave Hamilton's face, though, after a pause, he decided to answer pacifically:

"The lady you speak of is in affliction. She has recently lost her father, and her stepmother has just died, and it is not my opinion that you will now or ever be favored with her regard, which is not a matter of much consequence, as my stay here will not be longer than to arrange the business between us." He then went over to his mother and began a conversation with her.

Gerry had been some weeks at Hamilton's home, and, persistently declining any intercourse with the

family, when she was not shut up in her own room she wandered through the grounds, followed by Uncle Phil.

"Miss Gerry, honey," he asked her one day, "don't it neber 'repear strange ter y'u what makes folkes live erway from de ocean?" Ah, the ocean!

When the keynote is struck all the burial places of memory give up their dead, and forms and scenes long laid to rest troop back, bringing balm to the heart and mind in their sorest need. Stars may fall and a cloud pass across the face of the moon, but so long as mind and memory survive in their integrity, there remains a paradise out of which no one can be driven. And Gerry was a child again, wandering round the beach, that old familiar playground. How well she remembered the many times she had been drenched while stooping for a bright-hued shell and not observing the incoming wave. She had only laughed, and shaking her tiny fists at the restless water, which was laughing, too, had dared it to "do it again."

And how many marvels of the deep had she seen? Once there was a whale, which, wounded and chased by the harpooners, had in its blind rage swam, fighting, shoreward, to be stranded on the beach, where, with a hoarse bellow, it died. And then she had joined the body of her fellow-townspeople in their hurry to witness the wonder before the oil-makers began with their mutilation; and,

aided and abetted, she had sprung up on the dead leviathan and walked upward full sixty feet to its head; then, lowering herself into the wide-open mouth, she had cut off a piece of the flexible bone for a relic. Another time she had seen a live shark, of the man-eating sort, that had in its greed for prey ventured too near the shore for safety, and by a dash of the waves had been borne in and left high and dry on the sand, and there it lay, glancing with its wicked eyes and snapping with its cruel jaws at the group of excited gesticulating fishermen desiring to encompass its capture; the time was short, another wave might restore it to its native element in safety—the sea gives and takes. And Gerry in her willingness to help, which was one of her chief characteristics, advised "Bring lassoes." Her suggestion received admiring and respectful attention, and elicited the following affirmatives from a jury of mixed nationalities: "Si señorita." "Yes, missie Gerry." "Yar, dat's goode." "Yis marm." "Jes lesten to the queean," etc., etc. Lassoes galore, made of the stout bull's hide, were soon at hand, and the creature was securely noosed and dragged along in triumph, even as the Romans exulted over Jugurtha in chains, to a doom of torture of which Gerry had no conception, or her tender heart would have procured for the monster a speedy death, and as painless as might be.

And some of her devotees among the fisher-folk

caught and brought on shore and deposited in the corridor of the Custom House a cuttle fish for her especial inspection. And, too venturesome in her curiosity, she was saved from the reach of a terrible arm flung out to her by the quick movement of Kanaka Jack in throwing her backward. And he sorrowed days and nights over this cruel necessity. Alas, she had with a red-hot iron touched off one of the guns of the revenue schooner Frolic, thereby making a great noise in the world, as one of the officers said to her. Then she took command of the trim little vessel, which she sailed all round the bay, and brought back to anchorage. And on the occasion of her visit to the war sloop Vincennes Captain Hunter in an ill-considered moment struck colors and surrendered the ship to her. She immediately assumed command and had all hands piped up for grog and a holiday, much to the annoyance of the aforesaid Captain Hunter, the amusement of the ward room officers, and the hilarious delight of the "hands." Gerry sighed, it seemed so sad that all such halcyon days were gone, gone, utterly gone.

"It is not possible for every one to live by the ocean, Uncle Phil," she replied after a long pause. "But things do appear triste away from it."

"Triste!" echoed Uncle Phil, indignant at the insufficiency of the expression. "Gewhillikins! dat ain't no name fer it. In dis place y'u carn't

see nothin'. Y'u carn't he-ar nuthin'! Y'u carn't eben breave good, quinciquonically"—he stopped, seeing a servant approaching, bearing a salver with a card on it, which he received, and, after handing it to Gerry, stood at attention, while she glanced at it. Her heart swelled, and tears came into her eyes as she read:

Charles Wood, U. S. A.

"Show the gentleman here," she said.

At the sight of Gerry, Captain Wood stopped short, shocked, and pained beyond measure at her altered appearance.

"You would not have known me, Charley?" she asked, rising to meet him, and holding out her hand. "Little did either of us dream when we last parted how we should next foregather."

"I would know you anywhere, or in any guise," he answered. "But good heavens!" the muscles of his face quivering with emotion, "how you must have suffered."

"Suffered?" she replied. "Why, no victim of a sixteenth-century tyrant 'put to the question' ever suffered such heart-breaking anguish."

"We had been out among the hills," he said, "chasing hostile Indians, without coming up with them for several weeks, when the intelligence reached me of the calamity of your father's death. Though I thought Paul Smith was with you and privileged to sorrow with your sorrow, I could not

keep away from you in your trouble, and obtained leave of absence. Judge of my dismay to learn when I arrived at Bonito of the accumulated misfortunes which had been showered upon you. Your father dead—your stepmother dead—and Paul Smith away—and strangest of all, you married to that fellow Hamilton, whom I knew you despised—and gone, no one knew where. You have no idea of the labor it has been to find you. Tell me how it all happened—this devil's work."

It was some moments before Gerry could find voice to reply, and then it was in the low quivering tones of sadness almost without hope.

"Can I tell you, Charley,

" 'How happy some o'er other some can be,'

why the earth opens and swallows up some, and why the lightning strikes some others? But sit down and I will try to tell you. How can I explain?" she said wearily. "Everything went wrong. My father died—Paul Smith had gone—I was too easily won—he was tired of me."

"Stop!" cried young Wood, "you are appropriating unnecessary distress. It is impossible that Smith voluntarily gave you up!"

"He did though," persisted Gerry.

"To be honest as the world goes is to be one picked out of ten thousand."

She would keep nothing back. Indeed it seemed a slight solace to tell all to Charley, and, though shivering with pain, she went on: "It was just the morning after you had left Bonito that Mrs. Southampton sent for me. She said a great deal. I would not have minded what she said, only she made me see things different from what they had ever seemed before. I do not think I would have cared much that my life had been devoted wholly to my own pleasure, which it had been, but when she spoke of papa's eyes being opened to that which every one was talking about, the disgusting way I had been pursuing Paul—that is the way she put it—and that he would be intensely mortified and angry with me. And that Paul himself would occasion an excuse to break with me, and he did, Charley. He insulted me—grossly insulted me! He roughly told me that I was mercenary, and accused me to my face of caring only for you. And, Charley," she burst out vehemently, "he had the insolence to ask me if you had not kissed me when you went away."

"What answer did you make him?" inquired the young officer in a low tone.

"What answer was left me to make but to order him to begone. And he took me at my word, scarcely offering an apology. Then came the horrible shock of papa's death—and no human came near us in our desolation save Hamilton only. I do not know why, but Mrs. Southampton had always liked

him. And I was so bound by a promise made to papa to be kind in all things, and to humor her; and nothing would serve her but my marriage. Indeed, I was so tortured that I could not have been in my right mind. I did resist all I could. I told him that he was odious to me—but he took me anyhow."

It was now all clear to Captain Wood. Gerry had been the victim of a nefarious plot concocted by Hamilton and Mrs. Southampton. Smith also had been tampered with by arousing his jealousy—and what a poor fool he must have been not to see that Gerry was as true as an angel from heaven.

"Poor sufferer," he said with infinite tenderness. "But you are not friendless, in the absence of Southampton and Frederic I am here to protect you."

Gerry looked at him wistfully, but she answered resolutely:

"I thank you, Charley, more than I can say, but your good will outruns your discretion. I have very little knowledge of a censorious world, but I have no need to be told that you are not a suitable champion in the rupture of such shackles as bind me. I am tied hand and foot, but I look for release in the return of my brothers—otherwise the life I am leading would be insupportable."

Captain Wood looked at Gerry attentively. His

heart ached to mark the utter change which had been wrought in her.

The bright peerless girl he knew had been forced single-handed into an engagement against the Legions of Sorrow and been vanquished. Her whole person bore traces of the dreadful struggle. Her bonny head had been lowered to the dust and still drooped—the lissom body seemed shrunken—the quick feet dragged slowly—the sparkling eyes grown dull—her very identity seemed gone, but in this faithful gallant young fellow's heart she was Gerry still, the one woman he cared for. And he would cheerfully die to restore to her the lost happiness, and life would not be altogether vain if by any personal sacrifice he could render her less unhappy.

"Doña Gerry, it is hideous to me to see you so circumstanced, and in the absence of your brothers I am your nearest friend. Would you not allow me to act for you were I a married man? There—is—that is," he stammered, the red blush flushing his cheek. "I have a cousin in Virginia—I don't know—but I think—perhaps—she might consent to marry me were I to ask her. Would you not then accept the refuge of my roof?"

Gerry looked at him with grave tenderness—it would not be going too far to say—very like a mother looking on a much loved son.

"Charley, there is no doubt about it, you are the

dearest boy in all the world, and you tempt me. But it would be hardly fair to the Virginia cousin, and I repeat to you I am manacled with no hope of escape except through my brothers—unless Providence should free me by death."

The young officer shivered; it did not seem possible to him that she could mean her own death—Heaven could not be cruel enough for that! She must mean Hamilton's death.

"Well," he answered, "you shall be free from Hamilton—I will kill him!"

"And so bring dishonor on me," she said sternly.

"Oh! forgive me," he cried. "Your distress maddens me. You never would see it," he continued passionately, "but I have loved you! do love you! and ever shall love you with a love so true that I would bear any pain to know that you were happy. That man Smith was never worthy of you! In his cold-blooded, suspicious, jealous nature he was tricked by the villain Hamilton into doubting you. Had I been in his stead, blessed with the assurance of your love, do you think that man or devil could have infused into me doubts of you?"

The tears rolled down Gerry's cheeks, and she replied, slowly, as if utterance hurt her:

"Charley, I am pained to hear this;" and looking upward, as if protesting against the hard decrees of Heaven, she continued: "And must it always be that true love shall bear such bitter fruit, and is

it a sin to be burnt out? Can those only be happy whose heart-throbs make feeble demonstrations?

"But compared to my situation, how enviable is yours. In the rush of man's work relief must come. While I, Prometheus-like, am chained to a rock for vultures to eat away my heart. Oh! if I could only climb mountains, swim rivers, fell trees, or work at any hard labor to occupy the mind and tire the body, I could wait for South and Fred with more patience. But God help me! I am only a woman. You must go now, Charley—it is bitter—but I must say it—I may not see you again. You have spoken words that we both must forget. But as a sister loves a dear brother so I do and ever shall love you —or rather as a mother loves her only son, I feel so old—my youth is gone," she placed her hands within his, "and now, my more than brother—farewell."

Obediently the young officer left her. The tears that rolled down his cheeks did not shame his manhood. His heart was rent with anguish more for the sorrows of the woman he loved than for his own. He never saw her again. His gallant young life was soon to go out at Ball's Bluff, bravely charging at the head of his regiment. With his death-wound his voice had a triumphant ring as he shouted: "Forward, men!"—his last command. But he died happy, knowing that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

CHAPTER XV.

"ME TER BE WHOOPPED!"

"We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough winds say 'No.'"

Gerry sat for some time filled with the saddest thoughts without perceiving the absence of Uncle Phil—a feeling of delicacy had caused him to withdraw during her interview with Captain Wood—missing him, she at once rose to ascertain his whereabouts. Some inner sense had warned her it were best to keep watch over the old man. And that same inner sense guided her in the choice of a path that lead to the rear of the mansion-house. An oblique turn suddenly presented to her view the domestic machine in movement. The white part of the family seemed to be almost as busy in directing as the black part was in executing the directions.

Hamilton's brother Edward who, seemingly had just returned from a ride on horseback, with his riding-whip still in his hand, stood watching the operations, and not infrequently making a remark of altogether disproportioned severity.

Some one had given Uncle Phil a pair of shoes to be cleansed; it was true he polished his own, feeling it to be necessary in order to present a suit-

able appearance, but to be commanded in a harsh tone to clean a pair of extremely soiled shoes was an indignity that cut him to the quick. "Dess like I was one ob y'u common low down niggers," was the mental comment as he began the cleansing process in, it must be confessed, a very dilettante manner. Edward Hamilton's angry look fell upon him. "Come here, you old scoundrel," he ordered, raising his whip.

"My Gawd!" exclaimed Uncle Phil in a voice of agony, "me ter be whoopped!"

But as often happens, at the supreme moment succor was near.

"When the need is highest, help is nighest."

There was a sound like that of a gale at sea, and with blazing eyes and teeth set, Gerry caught the whip before it could descend on Uncle Phil's shrinking shoulders; and Edward Hamilton felt himself to be in the grasp of a Titan, while the heavy blows were falling like rain from the hot swift lash.

"Woman!—fiend!" he gasped, struggling in vain to get loose; then yelling with pain he shouted, "Murder! help!"

It would have been a bold thing to do to rescue him. None there durst attempt it. And not until he had received what he would himself, under different auspices, have called "a devil of a whipping" did Uncle Phil's young lady desist, and release her

hold upon him. Then turning to the group of her new relations, who in wondering terror were huddled together—she stood like a tower of strength standing four square to every wind that blows—and said in accents that seemed to fall from iron, so hard and inflexible were their ring:

"I have just one remark to make. Uncle Phil, my father's valued friend, and mine, is old and unaccustomed to labor, and it is my will that he shall not be called on to perform any service. Also, I will state that if he is interfered with in the least I will flog whoever and by whom it is done." She then began to walk away.

The whip which she had dropped was instantly seized by Edward Hamilton, who, maddened with pain and rage, looked about him for a victim.

A partly foolish boy called Ben was, or rather had been, scouring knives, for he had suspended his employment and was gazing into space, with his eyes almost bursting from their sockets.

"Come here, Ben," he ordered.

Gerry instantly returned, and, placing herself before the frightened boy, said:

"I cannot allow anyone to suffer through an act of mine. Therefore, I will have to make common cause with Ben. Whip him if you like, but for every blow you give him, I promise you ten."

The foiled man, with an imprecation, turned away and walked into the house, followed by his

wife and mother. Their attempts at consolation were rudely repulsed.

"This must not get out," he said; "I shall be disgraced for life! Go and caution the negroes. Say, if it is only hinted, I will make them all drink sorrow by the cupful."

This task was undertaken by his mother. "Your Miss Geraldine was only in fun. She was playing with your Marse Edward," she stated with emphasis to Hannah, the cook, in the hearing of all the other still bewildered servants.

"Yes'm, I seed she wus. Miss Geraldine kin be mighty funny when she tries," was the politic answer.

Could Edward Hamilton have beheld Colonel Southampton's daughter after gaining the sanctuary of her room, the sight of her self-abasement would have seemed almost the equivalent of an act of indemnity.

Heavily she dropped on a chair, the crimson flush dyeing her cheeks with a blush so deep that it pained her. And Lady Macbeth's apostrophe to the hands which "all the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten," was not more bitter than the reflections over her own which she regarded as having been put to a most vile use, and looking with positive aversion on the tapering fingers she murmured, "What next new degradation is in store for me, I wonder?"

"Luncheon's ready, Miss Geraldine," announced a female servant tapping at the door. The attention of this girl had been irresistibly attracted all along by the want of deference shown by "Miss Geraldine ter we alls white-folks;" now it seemed to her that the stranger was no mere mortal, and the sable hand-maiden determined to secrete herself that very night in the bedroom to witness the undressing process, to see if there were not wings somewhere.

Luncheon! Must she again face those people? Yes, there was no help for it; it would never do for them to suspect her humiliation.

Slowly she rose, without elasticity, almost mechanically like bodies of wood or stone are transported on derricks, and descending the stairs took her place at the table.

The several pairs of eyes which glanced at her quickly, almost surreptitiously, could not discern an atom of change in her consistently haughty silent demeanor, suggesting the idea that she was in the midst of a party of strangers for the first time. The aversion with which she had been regarded by Hamilton's family now had taken on an ingredient of fear. She was something mysterious and altogether beyond their understanding, and, strange as it may seem, she rose in their respect.

Hamilton was absent, and his absence appeared unnoticed by her.

The luncheon over, she walked outward and seated herself, some distance from the house, under one of the large pine trees where she habitually passed much of her time. A location that, although umbrageous, would not seem desirable on account of its resinous nature—but those large pine trees were some reminder of her old home in California.

Uncle Phil was with her. He had definitely made up his mind to separate from her as little as possible, but seeing Hamilton approaching he withdrew to a neighboring pine, and spreading his bandana handkerchief on the periwinkle, seated himself on it, and gave free play to his meditations on the great desirability of Virginia and California as places of residence.

Hamilton's face wore a heavy frown.

"I have been told," he said angrily, "that fellow Wood was here this morning."

A faint sighing of the light breeze that rustled the pine needles was his only answer.

"Did you not hear me?" laying his hand on Geraldine's shoulder.

"Remove your hand," she commanded.

"Answer me," he said, roughly.

With seemingly little effort she threw off his hand as one might toss away a pebble. "Touch me again, if you dare."

How strong she is, passed through his mind.

Folding his arms he asked: "What did Wood want here?"

"To see me, of course," she replied. "You can scarcely imagine that he came to see you."

"I will tell you what it is," he rejoined passionately, losing the calmness of judgment which belonged to him and only deserted him in his rare moments of excitement. "My object in bringing you from California was to separate you from your associations there, and I'll be damned if you shall have any of it here."

Not even the oath from him could excite her. She only looked at him contemptuously while saying:

"I really do not see how it is in your power to hinder me from doing as I like. But for a reason, entirely disconnected from you, I am not likely to see Captain Wood again."

"Because he loves you, and has told you so!" he almost screamed.

"Yes," she answered laconically.

He stood trembling with passion.

"Woman, have you no shame? No decency?"

"No, not since my life has been connected with yours. You can now go. I have no more to say to you." It is impossible to describe the disdainful haughtiness of her tones. She would not have spoken so to the meanest underling. She turned abruptly from him, and he caught the glitter of a bracelet—she was in the deepest mourning yet she

always wore it, he remembered this now, his mind being abnormally suspicious. "Is not that Smith's bracelet?" he demanded.

"He placed it on my arm, certainly. Take it off if you choose," she said ironically, and extended her arm, showing the secure lock.

"Where is the key?" he asked eagerly.

"Look for it in the Pacific Ocean. There is where he threw it." Turning away from him, she gazed steadily on the open world before her, as if trying to decipher some cabalistic characters requiring the closest attention.

Foiled at every point, Hamilton walked away muttering savagely: "Curse the Southamptons; they will die but they will never give up; and her resentment to me will last to the end; and most persons would think I have not drawn a matrimonial prize, and clearly I have not, in regard to domestic felicity, but I won my game. I am no worse than other men, and it was her scorn that roused the devil in me. I do not regret what I have done, nothing can take away from me the satisfaction of coming between her and Smith—and ousting Wood too."

Not till twilight did Gerry return to the house. She was told that the family had gone to some tea-drinking. "But ole Miss she done lef' out some supper fer y'u," communicated the girl—the one who had been curious about the wings.

After drinking a tumbler of milk, Gerry went into the parlor and listlessly began a tour of inspection of the pictures, but she soon desisted as they were all seemingly portraits of the Hamiltons. She made an impatient gesture, and quite by accident her hand fell against the keys of an open piano. She started at the discord. She had loved music, but it seemed so long ago—that, and every other pleasure had gone out of her life.

"I wonder if I could sing," she murmured, running a scale. On the rack was a book of songs, and being an accomplished musician, she began playing the accompaniments and singing, turning over the leaves as they came until—was it there, or did she unconsciously change into an old, old song which had been a favorite of her father's—Highland Mary? Her voice rose loud and clear, filling the room with sweet, sorrowful strains, almost like the wailing of a seraphim, in celestial sorrow for the human love which weighs like lead on the earthly soul separating it from its God. Louder and clearer rose the wailing melody, "And still within my bosom's core shall live my Highland Mary," when, overcome by a rush of feeling she dropped from the piano-stool to her knees, and burying her face in the cushion, she broke into wild, ungovernable lamentations and sobs, such as might rend soul from body.

"Good gracious! Geraldine," cried the elder Mrs.

Hamilton, in affrighted tones, "what is the matter?"

At these words Colonel Southampton's daughter raised her face, every feature quivering, and blinded by her tears it took an instant to realize that the Hamiltons en masse were the spectators of her anguish. With a supreme effort, such as was Alvarado's leap for life, she collected and energized every resource of an indomitable will liberated—if these people had witnessed her debasement they should feel no triumph! Without precipitancy, she rose, and confronted her enemies, as she viewed them. It was a pitiful sight to see that young girl, standing alone, prepared to take her own part, but with the courage of her race she struck a fierce blow at the author of so much of her sorrow.

"What is the matter? you ask me; it would be more to the purpose if you asked him," she said, her low, inflexible, imperious tones adding a thousandfold to the force of her words—the mere motion of her hand toward him who before the world passed as her husband, expressed scorn. "But you would not get the truth. You shall hear it from me. That creature took advantage of the circumstances, in which he must have been aided by fiends, to force me—I was driven!—to stand by his side before a minister of God while a marriage service was read. But it is the last vestige of self-respect remaining to me that I am not, and never

have been, his wife. Sooner than become such I would endure to have my limbs lopped from my body. I—I—know not how to free myself from him, and I think I should die but for hope of the relief that the coming of my brothers will bring. Till then I am prepared to suffer," and with the step of an empress, not uncrowned, but wearing the imperial diadem, she left the room.

"O son!" cried the elder lady, "you should not have done this. Marriage is a divine institution, and it is wicked to enter into it"—here Edward Hamilton interrupting his mother, quoted: "Without the love that sanctifies and blesses it."

Hamilton was a hardened vessel, and outwardly did not flinch; he only laughed disagreeably and said: "I can imagine pleasanter things than having our domestic infelicities proclaimed on the house-top, as it were. And while in some respects I am tired enough of my bargain, in other respects I am not. There are compensating circumstances accompanying the privilege of calling Colonel Southampton's daughter Mrs. Hamilton—and I don't need any of your infernal sympathy."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A LITTLE CLOUD OUT OF THE SEA LIKE A MAN'S HAND."

"'Tis not the trial of a woman's war,
The bitter clamor of two eager tongues."

The small speck on the political horizon which had been long viewed by many without serious uneasiness suddenly grew into gigantic proportions, overshadowing America with its baneful gloom, and the tempest burst, bringing war—war most direful—civil war.

Neighbors, and, sadder still, brothers, conscientious, good men, took opposite sides. Some to support the flag under which they were born. Some to aid the particular section of their birth; among the latter was Hamilton, who armed himself to support the cause of the South.

Geraldine's only comment was: "It is well. Had you flown to arms in defense of the American flag, under which I have grown up and love more than my life every one of its stars and stripes, I might have looked on you as one of its defenders and so, perhaps, have despised you less. But now there is nothing dear to me which your hand has not been turned against."

Hamilton looked at her with an odd expression.

The patient dignity of her bearing alone denoted the bitter wrongs she had suffered, and while he was not able to comprehend the high elevation of her character, yet day by day he was conscious of a desire growing within him to win her love, at least her good will—and her unvarying scorn goaded him.

"It is never well," he replied, "to waste anything, and you really might be more economical of your words—I am quite aware of your sentiments toward me. But speak your mind you will, if the devil stands at the door."

"Don't you think," she said with calmness, "that you should always mention that presence with respect. In my opinion, he can do you so much harm."

Uncle Phil, knowing himself to be in a delicate position, consistently sat on the fence, refusing to express an opinion concerning the merits or demerits "ob dis rumpus de white folkes wus kickin' up." For a change of his views, or rather in deciding them, Virginia was responsible. When she "went out" he promptly seceded with his State, as "a gempleman oughter do," and boldly proclaimed himself to be a Southern man, and loyally clung to his politics without wavering through many discouragements, though the dark days of corn-bread severely tried his patriotism, destined to finally fall under the absence of coffee.

The previous life of Gerry had been so far removed from sectional animosities that she was as one bewildered. The whole South was in an uproar, and preparing for war with the alacrity that clearly indicated that the masses had no conception of what war really was—privations—painful marchings—weary watchings and bloody battles. But as if they had eaten of the weed of madness they rushed on without pausing a moment to reflect on the awful nature of the storm they were hurrying to meet.

Owing to the active part taken by Hamilton Gerry was not only invited but also expected to join the Southern ladies in their soldiers' aid associations, and social-political reunions. She only shook her head, saying: "You must excuse me," and looking at her sable clothing, added: "I am in deep affliction, but I will help to nurse your wounded soldiers." That time soon came, and her promise amply redeemed. For the first years of the war the Northern newspapers came through "the lines" quite regularly, and always with painful tidings for Gerry. How sad it was for her to read of the heroic death of Charley Wood while leading a charge against "that terrible horse-shoe" at Ball's Bluff after the fall of the brilliant gentleman and soldier, Colonel E. D. Baker. Quickly following fell many others whom she had known and called friends; with whom she had often danced and

joined in many merry-makings. Indeed, she read no list of the Federals killed in battle without seeing names around which clustered many pleasant recollections. Poor Major Charres, mortally wounded at Fredericksburg! How well she remembered a time, not so long ago, when returning from a scouting expedition and bear-hunt combined he had brought her a champagne bottle filled with an oleaginous fluid which he said was "genuine bear's oil, to his certain knowledge, for he had shot the grizzly and tried down some of the fatty substance himself for her special behoof—it being good for the hair."

Nor could she forget his extreme mortification at her prompt and indignant repudiation of the idea of subjecting her abundant tresses to other treatment than the septuary washings with soap and water followed by rinsings with the pure element.

"Your hair always looks so glossy," he said in exculpation, "and I am sure I have heard that ladies used pomatum, which is undoubtedly oil of some sort."

"Perhaps they do—some of them," she answered, and graciously adding: "I will keep the bottle as a relic. I have carefully put away a large and miscellaneous assortment of valuables."

And now dead was that gay young fellow, and his pleasant voice would never be heard again.

Also there was Captain Sulett, shot through the

heart at Seven Pines; and now that he was sanctified by the sad mystery of death it seemed something akin to sacrilege to recall the uproarious laughs at his expense occasioned by the admixture in about equal proportions of indigenous honesty and ignorance of the Spanish language. He had his quarters in the cuartel, which occupied a town site, in the rear of which was a small lot where the army vehicles were stored. This lot was separated from the premises of a muger del pais by a substantial adobe wall. Over this wall one day flew one of the muger's discontented gallinas, and finding things to her liking she scraped together a few straws and making herself a sort of nest laid into it an egg. The marketable value of eggs being one dollar and a half per dozen rendered eggnog a beverage not enjoyed every day, and, as a rule, officers like eggnog; therefore, Captain Sulett not only added to the comfort of the nest, but also appealed to the hen's appetite by scattering lavish handfuls of government corn to induce her to return. She accepted the bribe, and a series of diurnal visits and diurnal eggs ensued until the delighted officer saw his way to the desired beverage. An evening was designated and his intimates invited to assist at the revel. These intimes were on hand punctual to a minute, but were regaled only with good hot whisky punch. Of course they should have drunk what was set before them asking no questions, but

they clamorously demanded the promised eggnog, and Captain Sulett was forced to an explanation. He extenuated nothing concerning the possession of a round dozen eggs, clearly his by the nine points of law—but he had lost them.

"How did you lose them?" was categorically demanded.

"Well," answered the centurian, seeing all retreat cut off. "I hate to call women bad names, but that infernal Mexicaness who resides over the other side of our adobe wall made me a visit this morning in my modest bachelor quarters. I was surprised and not wholly pleased, but I hope to always have the manners of a gentleman, so I hastily removed my coat and vest from one of the chairs—my boots and some other things were on the other—and politely suggested that she be seated. I sat on the side of the bed and feeling sure that she must observe her visit to be ill-timed I was prepared for an early withdrawal. But she was not diffident, and voluble. I did not understand her language, yet I clearly saw that she was making some demand which must be satisfied—and so—to get rid of her—I delivered up the oval treasures. But if this was bad, worse was to follow," he added in a heated manner. "She departed only to return with an interpreter to thank me for the gift of the eggs and to request the loan of a cart for a day, which was

the favor she had come to ask of el señor Capitan. Just imagine my feelings!"

In their moments of conviviality gentlemen are prone to an excess of merriment hardly warranted by delicacy of sentiment or expression, and Captain Sulett's efforts to sustain with good humor the united raillery directed against him did him infinite credit.

"I am awe-struck at the sublimity of the idea," said a gaunt veteran with a huge saber-wound scar from brow to chin—a Mexican souvenir—"that we have within our corps a comrade whom we can confidently propose as a worthy Sunday school teacher."

"He is capable of still better things," supplemented a manly major. "He ought to contract a matrimonial alliance. And who knows but that he might have children of his own, and the world gladdened again with a second Washington."

"Comrades mine," said a young officer, not a year from West Point, "we are the victims, disappointed of our dearest expectations, yet let us congratulate ourselves that such transcendental integrity has been found in the army. He should be put into a glass case and ticketed."

"Oh! you can laugh as much as you please," interposed Captain Sulett, "but the honor of the lady's visit was unexpected—I was taken by sur-

prise—my toilet was inchoate—and I did not know what to do."

"Do?" cried the young officer with a gay laugh. "Why—why, you must be very peculiarly constituted not to be able to stand such a siege with equanimity if the lady could."

"Just listen to his talk!" said the gaunt veteran. "It's splendid audacity is owing to his salad days. Darling," he continued, looking at the young officer with admiration commingled with compassion, "unless you be exempt from the common fortunes of men you will soon learn the tremendous advantages possessed by a woman. If, accidentally, she gets in your way you can't knock her out of it, and even when she by deliberate intention deploys into line and offers fight in open field, you can only surrender at, or rather with, discretion—or, better still, take to your heels. The latter alternative has always been my practice, and I am a bachelor yet, thank God! But I have tender recollections, as doubtless you all have. Therefore, comrades, let us drink in silence to a memory, light our Habanos, and depart peacefully on our several ways. Not omitting to thank our host for his gracious entertainment, and to hope for him better luck next time."

Alas! that so much good comradeship, and its innocent mirth, and its playful badinage, was so soon to terminate forever. And, alas! that what is called

life with all its glorious possibilities, and its boundless aims and hopes should end on the bloody field of battle, and these revelers with white rigid faces upturned to the pitying stars of Heaven go forth to investigate the Great Perhaps.

"Man proposes and God disposes." We can scarce make a step in our appointed walk without seeing some corroboration of that grand truth. Look back and recall Geraldine Southampton, her careless defiant ways, her frank off-hand manner, her transient fits of haughtiness, each and all had a several attraction, and no mere statuesque beauty was ever so fair, gay and winsome. And all in a moment, as it were, when her cup of happiness was brimming, bubbling over, the beautiful dream came to its end; and her life was emptied of its fullness at its fullest, just when she began to comprehend the magical melody that was heard first in the Garden of Eden, and to understand how rich and rapturous existence might be. Suddenly, with scarce a note of warning, a change came, the roseate sky turned black and Gerry found herself to be in the grasp of some cruel, inexorable evil and transported to the City of Suffering for the crucial test.

In these days of equalization when the terrible vox populi roars its fiat that all men are and ought to be free and equal it is hazardous to repeat the aphorism—though it is as old as the hills—that "blood will tell;" yet when brought face to face with

eminent danger or certain destruction place confidence in it. Agag, King of the Amalekites, "went delicately" to the horrible doom of being "hewed to pieces before the Lord." And the pitiless Saul who, when wounded by the archers and the battle going sorely against him, took a sword and fell upon it that he might die like a king. And the "painted and curled darlings" of the French King's household, after their army had been cut to pieces and all seemed lost, springing from their silken couches, fought like demons, turning disastrous defeat into glorious victory.

With almost feelings of relief, as if despair was making for itself an outlet, Gerry devoted herself to hospital work. The harder it was the better she liked it. She never held back from aiding to dress bloody wounds, and was always ready to bathe fevered, soiled and unshorn faces, or with patient effort endeavor to soothe men wild with pain. But it saddened her inexpressibly to watch for and to await the end when the soul took its flight—sometimes in awful agony—from its mutilated tenement.

Perhaps in that day of reckoning before the Great White Throne, and all the nations of the earth shall be assembled, and each separate individual asked the question by the Supreme Father, "What have you done to inherit eternal life?" the best answer, I fancy, will be: "I had pity on your suffering children." If such be the case, Geraldine Southampton

will be entitled to a fair rebate for all of her thoughtless folly before the evil days like an armed man came upon her. About this child born of affluence there was an attraction, a power of attachment, not often possessed in so eminent a degree. Her mere presence in the pain-stricken wards had its charm. At her coming tired eyes would brighten, and pain would lose half its energy to torment.

Even her constant companion, old Uncle Phil, was not unwelcome. And his oft-repeated recitals of the glories "ob de Southamptons when dey wus in Wirginny, an' dar wusent much ter complain ob when dey wus in Kaliforny," were listened to with pleasure.

One day passed very like another day; and the active sympathy going hand in hand with Gerry's ministrations fatigued her daily to almost mental and physical exhaustion, and the "mouthful of fresh air," when her day's work was done was always looked forward to as the restorative.

Hospital nurses soon learn to distinguish the sounds of war, whether it is skirmishing bridle in hand either to advance or retreat, or whether it be skillful generals charging with the several divisions of their troops in regular succession. If the latter, they know that the wounded will soon be coming in greater numbers than their eager, willing hands can care for. But they nerve themselves for their best efforts—and oh! the torture to wit-

ness those cruel wounds made in human flesh by the ruthless canister. The cry can hardly be kept back, "Oh where is God?"

Gerry had passed such a day, and, wearied almost to the extinction of life, she was slowly making her final round to wish each one "good-night." She knew how much this was to these suffering men. A low, strangling moan caught her ear. She paused to listen—she had heard such a moan before. Some one was speaking, the words were labored and solemn. Solemn because spoken in the near proximity of Death. "I am—dying—will—some—one—sing—a—hymn?" Gerry waited a moment, to see if one of his comrades would comply with this last request. No one volunteered. Again came the tremulous words, "Will some—one—sing—a—hymn?" She drew a deep breath to collect her strength, and quickly passed to the dying's man cot, and tenderly laying her hand on the heaving breast she began to sing that noble anthem "Rock of Ages." Clear as the notes of a flute—like the triumphant strains sung in Heaven—her voice in all its passionate, glorious fullness rang out with jubilant, vibrating melody that thrilled heart and brain. As the last strain ceased a slight shudder stirred the soldier's body—the suffering lips wreathed into a smile—the man had ceased to suffer.

Reverently she laid the dead hands across the still heart. Then by some sudden, some holy im-

pulse, she pressed her lips on the brow which when last kissed by a woman received the good-bye kiss of his mother.

And as Gerry glided her way out of the rude hospital she almost seemed to the war-worn inmates like a transient visitor lent from a brighter world. To them her singing was such as had never before been heard by mortal ears. Memories and hopes long dead lived again, and once again surrounded them in bodily presence. Their drooping spirits were comforted, and their saddened souls lured to a higher pitch of faith in God than they could ever have unassisted attained.

Geraldine, Colonel Southampton's daughter, it is well for you to have lived to this hour. It is well to have suffered all your heart's anguish for this privilege, even for a moment of speaking as in the similitude of a messenger direct from Heaven to tell that when earthly consolations fail there is a sure refuge above, and that the Eternal Father will never deny His children, and that His mercy is without limit, and that the thorny road is often the road to Heaven.

Although about this girl-woman, as the world goes, there were higher sorts of loyalty and good faith than the commoner kind of mortals can dream of, she had not yet taught her own wounded spirit to forget the frightful reefs over which it had battled, and to look above for a joy which no uncer-

tainty could destroy, and no falsehood take away.

The war had been going on for three years, and with following the army in its marchings and counter-marchings, its advances and retreats, Gerry felt to be an old soldier. Though she loved not their cause, she loved the Southern soldiers; she saw so much to admire in their noble bearing, their patient fortitude under incredible hardships.

She was sitting in her tent one day laboring assiduously with her unskillful fingers to manufacture a shirt out of her flannel dressing-gown, for a soldier whose hollow cough had attracted her notice. Now that woolen garments were phantoms of the past, or only pleasing memories, the utility of such a gift may well be imagined. Uncle Phil rushed in wild with excitement, too much so to observe the strict decorum of speech which, for those with the army in any capacity, is highly to be commended.

"'Fore Gawd! Miss Gerry, honey, we is whoopped. We jes as well gin in at onct. Provi-dence ain't neber gwien ter prosper no sich goin's on. I jes hearn tell, fer er fac', dat Gineral Bragg has jes gone an' had one ob dem solger-mans ob ourn—an' de good Lordy in Heaben knows dat we ain't got none too many ob dem—shot—dead! jes fer liftin' er chicken." He took out his old pocket-handkerchief to wipe away his tears, and he whimpered. "An' it ain't been so long ergo dat I hearn Gineral

Bragg myself talkin' scandlous ter a white man, jes kase his pockets wus bulgin' out wid taters er apples—I 'spose, he 'lowed dat it neber would be diskivered. I felt so sorry fer dat white man dat I would er said somethin' ter de gineral—but I thought mebby I had better not. In korse I ain't blamin' y'u fer none ob it, honey—I am jes noratin' de truths; but I jes do wush from de bottom ob my heart dat I had neber j'ined dis army, an' ef I know anything ertall 'bout my own feelin's, I don't want anything mo' ter do wid it. I don't know when I eber las' did hab anything fitten ter eat. Kornbraid fa'rly scratches my troat—an' no coffee, neber! an' I neber wus no hand ter eat milk. An' me, borned in Wirginny, wearin' de korses kine ob cotton close—'lowell,' dey call it. An' fer shoes! my Lord, look at dat," he said in tones of deep disgust, putting out a foot with a very ill-made shoe upon it. His statements were not eloquent, but they were without ambiguity.

"I wouldn't worry if I were you, Uncle Phil," said Gerry soothingly. "I hear we are going to start for Mississippi soon; perhaps it won't be so hard there. Don't you want to see the magnolias?"

"I don't know as I dooz," replied Uncle Phil, not encouraged, "I don't 'zactly hanker arter wanderin' permiscus round dis kentry—I've seed ernough ob it. I had er heap ruther see er sizeable plate piled up wid good hot sody biskits, an' er dish ob bilin'

hot coffee—but 'tain't likely dat I will eber be spared ter see ary one ergin."

Sure enough they soon did start for the great river, but the roads were wretched beyond description, and the teams, worn nearly to exhaustion, making the distance traveled seem very great.

"Look there, Uncle Phil!" cried Gerry, strenuously exerting herself, at the first view of the noble river, to speak with enthusiasm. "There is plenty of water."

"Fraish water," sniffed Uncle Phil contemptuously. But big waters did have an attraction for him, and he soon wandered to the leveed shore, which he examined curiously, muttering, "What's dis fer?" Then he sighted Louisiana on the opposite bank, with no pleasure, and he expressed himself disconsolately, "Mo' lan' yit."

They found the pleasant village of Port Gibson a peaceful resting place. A large number of Confederate troops were in encampment near there and the one long street of the village was constantly enlivened by the passing and repassing of gray-clad soldiers.

Citizen-soldiers carry with them to the camp their home ideas and between battles they consistently put war's alarms out of sight and enjoy with infinite zest every social pleasure within their reach. And these fighters, the best the world ever saw, plunged at once into a round of gayeties, prom-

enades, rides, drives, parties, tableaux, and even musicales. Nor was this all; many a young fellow thought it no dishonor to lay down his arms at some fair maiden's feet. And he who wooes carrying his life in his hand, as it were, has a tremendous advantage. There is no time for coyness—no time for the usual follies when a lover is made to fetch and carry like the best of retrievers. Ah! no, the uncertainty is too great that the promised hand will never be claimed. And the time too imminent when the love-light now in the young hero's eyes will be changed to the deadly hate engendered in battle, and perhaps the last beat of his heart will be throbbing with fierce rage for his foeman, and not with love for the young heart that will ache none the less because it can tell its sorrows only to Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BISHOP OF MOBILE.

"When other helpers fail, and other comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me."

"Miss Gerry, chile, dey do tell me, fer er fac', dat dose Roman Katholic folkses livin' down roun' here hab done gone an' built 'em er cherch, an' dar's whar I'm gwien ter dis blessed Sunday—ter sorter 'member me ob Kaliforny. Y'u knows y'use'f, Miss Gerry, honey, dat we went ter dat cherch mor'n ha'f de time. We neber had no 'Piscopalian cherch ter go ter straight on reg'lar. Dat cherch wus Marse Robert's cherch, an', in kose ourn. But I ain't bin ter no Roman Katholic cherch sense we done lef' Kaliforny, an' dar's whar I am gwien ter dis blessed day, ef de Lord spar's me."

Gerry put on her hat. She, too, would go, though she almost felt herself to be forgotten of God. But the familiar ceremonials would at least be a reminder of the old happy days which now seemed so long ago.

The prosperous happy go to church to return thanks for benefits received—to acknowledge favors bestowed, and to entreat for their continuance. And to bless God that they are not as others. Not so go

the ailing of mind or body. To these the temple of God is a temple of refuge. He is no respecter of persons, and here is the only place under Heaven where all are equal, and must stand or fall as they have wrought. The rich are stripped of their goods —the learned of their sophistries—the powerful separated from their high places; and the soul naked as it came into the world exposed to the piercing eye of Omnipotence, and if disfigured by sin here is the equal remedy in the water that issued from the sacred side. And many a weary, stricken spirit driven here in anguish to grovel for mercy, has been strengthened and comforted by the soft melody whispered from divine lips: "Go in peace."

Gerry found little to remind her in that spick and span new wooden edifice of the large ancient adobe iglesia she remembered so well. Conspicuously absent were the two huge allegorical paintings, one on each side of the front entrance. The painting on the right hand was intended to represent the immortal abode of the blessed with its glorified inhabitants, presumably wandering to and fro, carrying harps, their countenances indicative of celestial bliss. Also there were a great number of corpulent small angels swimming around in midair.

The converse represented on the left hand was a picture of the lost souls condemned to expiate their misdeeds in the endless torments of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, into which they

had been precipitated without hope of escape, for, standing on the shores, in sufficient numbers, were devils armed with pitchforks to forbid a landing.

And no less in sharp contrast was the choir composed of a few well-trained voices and a melodeon to the harps and guitars and the sweet but untutored singing of the Indians.

And of a type diametrically opposed to Padre Ramiras, who, in bodily presence was a stalwart warrior of the Church Militant, was the Bishop of Mobile, who was here to-day to consecrate the new-built church. His spare form was thin to emaciation, and his complexion was of that peculiarly pure tint acquired only by a long course of rigidly abstemious living; and from his clear, brilliant eyes the lurid light of human passions seemed to be forever banished. All this was rather felt than perceived by the eye of Gerry, whose mind was so much occupied with painful emotions that she scarce heard the familiar Latin offertory until in elevated tones Father O'Bannon uttered the solemn Church warning: Sursum corda. At the response, Habernus ad Dominum, she visibly shuddered. A pertinacious inward voice was saying, "Ah! how can I ever lift up my heart to God, filled as it with an ungoverned human love, and must it forever stand between me and all hopes of earth, shutting out even hopes of Heaven?" A sadness almost to death came over her—a general sense of misery, pain and

terror. Alas! who is strong enough to wrestle for weary months with heart-breaking despair without coming dangerously near the border-land of insanity? And human beings never struggle so hard as when they struggle alone, without witness, counselor, or comfort, unencouraged, unadvised, and unpitied. Then comes that wild cry for help—help! no matter how, but help!

In the olden times Jehovah's voice was heard out of flaming fire in the midst of thunder and lightning, and delivering the inflexible mandate, "If ye sin ye die." But religion achieved a grand triumph in the coming of our Savior, who walked among men, and was touched by their infirmities, and when bleeding on the cross opened his arms for all the afflicted of earth. This was the theme of the Bishop's sermon, and his gentle tones fell upon Gerry's ear soothingly. Involuntarily she raised her eyes, and the thought passing through her mind that he looked to be good and true she was conscious of a great desire to speak with him. Not, she felt, that he could say, or that any one could say aught to quiet the tumult always raging in her heart, yet it would be of some comfort to hear him speaking to her in his kindly tones.

So strong was this desire that when the Bishop was leaving the church he was stopped by Gerry with the request:

"Could you give me a few minutes, father? I

am not a Catholic—but I am in trouble—and I think that I would like to speak to you."

With grave kindness he led the way to the vestry-room, and placing a chair for her, took one himself and said:

"Now, my child, tell me all you wish. Are you not Mrs. Hamilton? I have heard much of your charities in the hospitals—you are much to be praised."

"I am to be praised for nothing!" she burst out impetuously. "But I am no hypocrite, and I say to you that my temperament revolts against the sight of suffering in any form, and I am driven to my work in the hospitals by my own restless misery." The eyes she turned toward him were almost fierce as she continued: "You see before you one in the toils! One doomed by the wrath of Heaven! It was not even given to me to die free—I was driven into an ignominious bondage!" She drew a long sobbing breath; then came a violent reaction; and how bitterly she regretted her display of weakness. Remember she was the descendant of a long line of sword-wearing ancestors, who, winning or losing, could always smile pleasantly; and who would have expired under the knife without a groan. And she, in an unguarded moment, had yielded to an unrepressed longing for sympathy. No words can describe the intensity of remorse and self-debasement which swept over her with the feeling that she had

forgotten the traditions of her father's house—forgotten that she was her father's daughter, and "whined like a sick cat."

The Bishop's looks were of wondrous pity. He had witnessed so much of human sorrow in all its forms, and so much of human pride in all its exhibitions, and it was easy for him to see that she was bearing the burden of a sin not her own; and that all the elements of prejudice, pride, and inexperience were massed in force barring her way to a lighter path. He sighed, thinking of the pity of it that her youth should be so overshadowed. There were all the materials for the making of a perfect woman if her heart and brain could be brought into harmonious action, and his voice was very tender as he said:

"Will you not tell me the nature of your trouble?"

The face she raised to his was deeply flushed, and wearing the impress of a proud humility, as she answered:

"I must beg your pardon for this intrusion. But you appeared to me to be so wise and good—that I was tempted, beyond my power of resistance—to seek from you a word of good cheer. And I feel sure that you will accept my present humiliation as my best apology. I now see what I should have seen earlier, that what is laid on me to bear I must bear. I have only done what seemed to me to be the bitter, hard right, and I shall continue to do so—in my

own way—moral responsibilities cannot be shifted. But I suffer! I suffer! Can you doubt it?" There was a fearless look in her eyes though her face had grown white with pain. "I will now go."

"You must pardon me," said the Bishop, "if I refuse to let you go. And if for your own sake I beg your confidence. I am an old man with much experience, and if I do not see a way—a lighter way—a way easier for you to tread, I can at least pray to God for you. Confide in me, dear child." There was so much persuasion in his tones that Gerry was induced almost against volition to relate her miserable story.

The Bishop listened attentively, and at its conclusion said:

"In one way, my child, you have acted nobly—the most exalted of human motives is self-sacrifice; but indeed you were mistaken. By what right did you consent to that marriage ceremony with him who now passes for your husband, feeling yourself bound by every tie of honor and affection to the absent Smith?"

"I was also bound," she answered quickly, "by the promise given to my dead father to care for his poor invalid wife in preference to myself, and a promise made to the dead cannot be canceled. And I did no wrong to the man Hamilton—I told him the truth! The wrong was all to me! He and she would have it so."

"Still," urged the Bishop, "as the past cannot be undone for your own comfort, not to say happiness, would it not be better to live on terms of amity, at least, with Colonel Hamilton? I hear he is a brave, efficient officer."

"No! a thousand times no!" burst out Gerry. "If I am good for nothing else I am good to tell the truth and I have promised him my undying enmity. For his own ends he has spoiled my life, and he must drink as he has brewed! Nature has certain immutable laws, some chemicals will not unite with other chemicals—it would be as easy to unite fire and water. And you cannot know—you are too high above such a weakness! how my ill-governed heart each day weeps tears of blood over the ashes of my lost love. And if I ever pray it is for deliverance from my cruel bondage. Oh! before my troubles came it was such a free, glorious life—I was then so happy." She paused, breathing like one in extremity, gasping for breath. "And must I tell you that if this dominating love could be removed from my heart by some triumph of surgical skill I would not wish it? And how indescribably hard it is to bear my appalling sensations of absolute loneliness, sometimes terror, as if everything had gone away from me, and that I was left powerless to contend against an inexorable, malign influence."

The aged Bishop sighed again; he was touched by her passionate sorrow though all mundane

things seemed to him trivial, but he was aware that she could not see things as he saw them. And who does not know that the cruel paths of earthly love may lead the feet that tread them to the ivory gates of Heaven, and that nothing can happen not permitted by God? Still her grief troubled him.

"Reflect, dear child," he persisted gently, "that in the natural order of events the direst misery of this life is only transitory, and the sanctified end must be wrought by sanctified means. And is there no happiness for you in the thought that you were imperatively called by our Heavenly Father to be one of his ministering angels? And you may be very sure that when that Great Day shall come when we must all plead for mercy it is not then that a life of pure happiness, were pure happiness an earthly possibility, would count for much. Would it not count infinitely more to be able to say, I have been faithful to the work put to my hands?

"Suffering, dear child, is coeval with Adam. And though we cannot fathom why, yet it must be subserving of useful and intelligent ends. And, after all, when we have climbed the Mountain of Expiation what does it matter how often our foreheads have been touched by the scourge of the Purifying Angel, and often in mercy. Therefore, my dear child, I earnestly counsel you to be patient. And I implore you do not try to bear your troubles alone —a task too hard for any one; but come to the foot

of the cross, there you will be sustained and comforted—I know not how, or in what way, but by the authority of the Sacred Word I can promise you effectual help."

The Bishop had raised his head—his face glowed, and the pure light gleaming in his eyes seemed scintillations from the pure world he was now so near.

Gerry was deeply moved, and her answer touching in its humility.

"I thank you, father, for your kindness, and if I could I would profit by your admonitions, but my nature is so faulty that I cannot recognize God's hand in man's cruelty. And if there is no future beyond the stars for passionate earthly love, then indeed, it were better that some of us had never been born."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD LOVER EN SCENE.

"There be good fellows in the world,
An' a man could light on them."

Almost without warning pealed the alarm for the renewal of hostilities—the Federal gunboats had passed the batteries at Vicksburg, heretofore styled the Gibraltar of the West. There were no more outings now, every man must be at his post.

The Federal fleet opened its fire upon the works of Grand Gulf, Colonel Wade replying with his mortars until killed at his guns. This popular officer was brought to the Port Gibson cemetery for interment. It was a sad sight to see following the hearse the led horse with the empty saddle and the boots the dead officer would need nevermore.

On the next day began the land fighting for the possession of Vicksburg ("We have come to knock at the back door," facetiously remarked Colonel Johnston, of Major-General Grant's staff); and all that long May day was passed by Gerry in the hospital where the wounded men were brought from the field of battle, wounded in every imaginable fashion, from the little round hole—not so bad to look at—which soldiers know so well. No surgeon's

sentence is needed to tell them that the man will never march again in this world. And how sickening are those ugly hurts, rent and jagged by the canister.

About sundown an ambulance was sent by Hamilton for Gerry's removal. At the suspension bridge spanning the Bayou Pierre her progress was almost barred by the crowd of non-combatants hurrying across, volubly announcing their patriotism and their intention to stay in the Confederacy so long as there was an inch of it left.

The officer, whose duty it was to burn the bridge to retard the enemy, was loudly berating them, accusing the men of cowardice for not being in arms. "And so long as you don't fight," he cried hotly, "it makes no difference where you are, whether in the Confederacy or in hell!" Seeing Gerry, whom he knew by sight, his angry manner changed to polite consideration. "Here, madam, this way, pass right over." Then he ordered a squad of soldiers he had with him to form into line and "Keep these people back with your bayonets." A barrel of turpentine had been placed on the bridge and, dipping into it with a pitcher, the woodwork was soon drenched with the inflammable fluid, and Gerry was scarcely over when a match was applied and a bright light briefly illuminated the gathering twilight.

On the third day afterward, Gerry in her some-

what roundabout journey came across the Sixth Regiment of Missouri Infantry when they were taking their ten minutes' halt. This regiment had been taken out of the trenches at Grand Gulf, and double-quicked eight miles and precipitated into the battle before Port Gibson, and were now the rear-guard of the Confederate army in full retreat. With little rest and little food this fatiguing duty taxed to the utmost their courage and physical endurance. At the welcome halt of ten minutes every two hours down they would drop, right where they stood, not to lose an instant of the much needed rest. A mounted courier had just come up and was reading aloud an army despatch which claimed a brilliant victory for the Southern forces in Virginia. The reading was listened to in silence—these old soldiers had grown distrustful of the brilliant victories claimed at opportune times—until the mention was made that Stonewall Jackson had lost an arm. "I wish to Heaven," said one of the weary soldiers, slowly raising his head, "that they would send that arm here to take command of us." It seldom falls to the lot of an officer to be as universally disbelieved in as was Pemberton. In the awful siege of Vicksburg, so soon to follow, this gallant regiment lost its gallant Colonel, Eugene Erwin, and so many of its members that its organization was lost and never restored.

Owing to the great number of crossroads Gerry

frequently found herself entangled with portions of the retreating army. Her ambulance had been given to the use of the disabled soldiers and nothing better could be found for her to ride than an antiquated mustang pony, and Uncle Phil grumbled audibly at the discomfort and disgrace of being mounted on a mule. "Not fitten for no gempleman's sarvant to ride." This was true—but the poor mule also had its side of the question; its numerous years, conjoined with an intimate acquaintance with the seamy side of life, would seem to render its own hardship—which it bore so patiently—greater than the hardship imposed on Uncle Phil.

These chance meetings were not unpleasant to Gerry. She always had a friendly word to give in lack of more substantial benefits, and for the soldiers was reserved that charming smile which so seldom relieved her features from their habitual gloom.

One day it was a cavalry regiment she got in the thick of, and she listened with sympathetic interest to the statements of their affairs. "Here we are, and have been in the saddle for twenty-four hours, and it is hard to say which are the worse off, we or our horses. What sort of a fight could we make now, empty as gourds? I don't believe I have strength enough left to pull my saber out of the scabbard." But he had, for at that moment, as if

by magic, the surrounding country became blue, and swords began their furious work.

Taken by surprise, Gerry was bewildered, but instinctively she drew rein, and sat still. In a moment a voice she would recognize anywhere, and the voice she had not heard for so long, rang out in clear imperious tones, "Company F, form round the lady and her attendant."

Safe within this living rampart Gerry was confined until the skirmish was over. Its duration was short, the hilly surface of the grounds and the thick brushwood favored the escape of the tired men on the tired horses. Then again Gerry heard that voice, which always had the power to stir her being to its deepest depths, giving the order, "Company F will file off quietly by twos and rejoin its regiment."

Only a few moments were consumed in the execution of this order; then Gerry knew that Paul Smith stood beside her; one glance revealing how set and stern his features were—her heart grew cold and she dropped from the saddle as one dead. Smith caught her in his arms, his features quivering strangely, and like a miser who had recovered long-lost gold he pressed her to his heart, murmuring passionate words of endearment—hungrily he gazed on the sweet pale lips he might not kiss, it would bring her dishonor, she was another man's wife.

The faint was a long one, yet how brief to him

seemed the moments he was thus privileged to hold her. Her consciousness returned, yet for an instant she lay quite still in his arms, her eyes closed. "Oh, let me die now," she prayed silently—a tear escaped from the closed eyelids and trickled down her cheek.

"This is more than mortal man can endure," said Smith, laying her down quickly on the soft grass. This action brought a faint glow to her cheeks. "He despises me," she thought, her wounded womanhood receiving a sharp blow. She attempted to rise but the effort was ineffectual.

"Remain quiet; you will be stronger presently," said Smith, but he did not offer her any assistance.

For shame's sake Gerry repressed her tears, and by a strong effort she sat up and declared herself recovered.

Where was Uncle Phil all this time? Screaming with terror when he saw Gerry faint he had scrambled down from his mule with such haste as he could make, being impeded by rheumatic difficulties, but witnessing the part taken by Smith, delicacy of feeling kept him slightly in the background an anxious looker-on; but he could now restrain himself no longer, and making a rush fell on his knees at Gerry's feet, grasping her dress and sobbing like a child, exclaiming in broken tones:

"Blessed be de good Marster in Heabin, my po', precious, sweet babby, dat y'u is alive!—an' itser

mussy dat any body iser live wid all dem weepins cuttin' an' slashin' all er-roun' eber' whar."

Smith's friendly glance rested on the old man while shaking hands with him. "Step aside, please, Uncle Phil, I wish to say a few words to your young lady. She is quite herself now."

Obediently Uncle Phil withdrew and getting out of sight behind a tree, concluded to improve the time by devoting it to prayer. What matters words to the Pure Intelligence? No matter what they are or if none at all, if the heart is only right its petitions will never be denied, and be sure Uncle Phil prayed right from his heart. "Oh, blessed Marster in Heabin! hear ole Uncle Phil dis time, y'u knows y'use'f dat he don't pester y'u often, but please, good Lordy! take it all outen on dis ole no-count nigger, but spar' dat chile. She is one ob de Southamptons, an' 'tain't fa'r fer her ter be 'flicted."

Left alone with Smith, Gerry's whole body quivered like an aspen leaf. What had he to say to her? What could she say to him? She had no strength of her own, but as an inspiration it came to her, that she must look to God for help, and mutely she prayed.

At last Smith spoke—he saw how she was suffering—and he was tortured—and the interview must be got over; his tones were husky—utterance gave him pain. "Gerry, I wish that I could say I had loved you only as a woman, but it was worship! and

standing here remembering there was no one but myself to blame, and that in my blinded folly I brought a grief upon myself that I wonder how I live. It seems to me that at times evil spirits are given power over us to work our ruin. I cannot ask you to pardon me—to think kindly of me; but I did love you so! do love you so! that I dare not look longer upon you."

Gerry looked up quickly, her face flushing—he did not then think meanly of her; and after this assurance life would be less hard—and, woman-like, she could repress her own agony to comfort him.

"Paul," she said, "it was all my fault. Your words were few, and my childish understanding could not guess the ardor of your devotion which, I feared, was only a passing fancy. My stepmother said so, and when she said that you had been only amusing yourself at my expense that made me frantic. But why dwell on that which followed? We are now separated by a gulf which neither you nor I can pass. There is nothing but to say farewell, and each of us to walk our appointed way. And, God forgive me! but I cannot wish you the happiness which would come in forgetfulness of me. Let me go now, please. You are a man and strong, and I am a poor, broken-hearted woman and must flee the temptation—almost the irresistible temptation, to ask that I may stay with you."

"You are right," he answered. "I must consider

you, and will at once prepare a flag of truce to get you to"—he could not say your husband—"where I hope you may be safe. Sit down, my own," she remembered long afterward how carefully he arranged his cape and how tenderly he seated her upon it. "I wish now to speak to Uncle Phil."

He found that aged colored person, his orisons concluded, all huddled together, his chin resting on his up-drawn knees. The old do not shed tears with facility, but his features were twisting into divers contortions expressive of great grief. With an impulse, resulting from a life-habit of extreme politeness, he was rising to stand respectfully.

"Keep your seat, Uncle Phil," said Smith sitting down beside him. "I need not ask you to take as good care of your young lady as you can, and to procure for her such comforts as are attainable, but you may need means. Take this," he said, placing a roll of notes into Uncle Phil's hand.

That exemplary person was fairly galvanized into action, springing up with the elasticity of youth. Money only figured in the storehouse of his memory among other past delights.

"Good Gawd A'mighty!" he burst out emitting a chuckle. "Oh, my blessed Marster in Heabin!" But he immediately grew solemn and sad, and made answer, respectful but firm. "No, I carn't take cha'ge ob it. We ain't never bin starbed ter death yit, do we ain't been libin on no nick-nacks, an' ter speak

squar'ly, I think it would be onbecomin' in me an' Miss Gerry ter be libin on y'u money. But ef y'u ain't got no dejections I would like jes ter count it ober ter sorter 'member me of ole times when nuthin' was skase." Almost lovingly Uncle Phil feasted his eyes on the greenbacks, which he then, with tender fingers, formed into a roll, and slowly, and, in truth, grudgingly, handed back to the owner, but he bravely said, "No, Marse Paul, me an' Miss Gerry can't take none ob y'u small change—her pap wouldn't like it. But ef y'u wus ter git er poun' ob coffee fer Miss Gerry, an' er pa'r ob butes fer me, I wouldn't feel called on ter ree-cline one nor de oder."

The arrangements were soon made—fortunately Smith had it in his power to gratify Uncle Phil about the boots and the coffee—and his own orderly, with a small guard, was detailed to be the bearer of the all-protecting white symbol.

Smith was a self-contained man, rarely showing outward sign of his emotions, yet his face was white with pain when he faced Gerry to speak farewell. He clasped her hand, his words coming slowly—he never had many at command, and now they almost refused to come at all: "Good-bye, Gerry—perhaps I may never look on your sweet face again—but God bless you forever and forever."

"True, Paul," she answered, fearlessly raising her clear eyes to his, "we may perhaps on this earth

not meet again, and let us now understand each other—we never did. I wish to tell you that no matter how much appearances are against me I am faithful to the vows pledged to you on the deck of the old McKim. I am not, except in name, nor ever shall be, death first! any man's wife but yours. Ah! Paul," she continued, keeping back a sob, "it is not always the love of pleasure that leads us into folly and into sin. Even stronger is the impulse that incites us to evil expecting good may come of it. When we are woefully beset, troubled on all sides, lost, and no light to guide, which path seems to be the path exacted by Heaven but the rough and briery one. But oh! it does seem so cruelly hard to sacrifice everything for a principle, although it may be a perverted one, without at least securing the reward of an approving conscience. I do not say it to excuse myself, but as some palliation of what I did in that dark time. I had promised my dead father—the dead!" there was infinite pathos in her appealing looks, "and I had always been all the world to him! and when he lay dying who was there but me whom he could ask to care for that poor woman. I did not pause to reflect—but it did not matter—for what I promised him then I would, under the same pressure, promise him now, to consult her wishes in preference to my own. She was like wax in the hands of Hamilton—and I was

forced to be wax in hers. I could not help myself."

Smith broke out in fierce maledictions.

"She is dead, Paul," Gerry interposed gently, "and I forgave her. She died clinging to me. And is it not strange that my heart did not then leap from its place and burst? The sense of utter misery was powerless to confuse the strength of facts from which there were no evasion, no appeal—I had been deprived of everything, even self-respect. Oh, Paul! Paul! you cannot imagine what a degraded creature I feel myself to be; and what mean feelings of envy take possession of me whenever I am in the company of a good woman and her husband. And I am so curiously revolutionized. I who was brought up so widely removed from poverty and labor. I now never pass a one-room cottage in the late afternoon, when the sun is going down, that I do not wish it had been Heaven's will that we two were living there together—you would then be coming home from your work, and I would be cooking your supper."

"Stop, Gerry," commanded Smith, "I feel myself not better than a wild beast when compared with you. There are heights, lengths and depths in your heart it was never in me to even dream of. And perhaps heaven was only taking care of its own in saving you from my rough keeping. I would only have marred your life. You are one of the few of God's creatures fitted by nature for the crucial tests. You

have passed through the heated furnace and emerged pure. You have been weighed in the balance and not found wanting, and therefore, by universal acquiescence, pronounced good. I would rather be your slave than any other woman's king.

"Rightfully you are mine; mine in spirit and in truth! and I bless God for the knowledge. It will make me more contented. And I will try, with Heaven's help, to be a better man. I have done very little of good in this world—always ill-tempered and selfish. But it is not too late to mend, and, Gerry, in the future should you ever hear anything creditable of me be sure that you are the cause of it." He had been holding her hands in his; he gently presses them; she feels the elastic quiver of repressed strength, and sees in his eyes the look of love far beyond words to express. "Good-bye, darling—I may not kiss you, yet God knows your sweet lips are mine! Farewell, farewell!"

Thus they parted. God's ways are not our ways. Yet sometimes it is permitted us to see that He deals with His children in mercy; shutting out the eager feet from the flower-decked main underneath which lies a deadly morass, and leading to safety through a briery path.

The discipline was necessary for Paul Smith, to teach him lessons of patience, and of usefulness to his kind, and to bring him to his God. And to Gerry, it made of her a ministering angel. And it cannot

be but those few years out of her young life dedicated to the cause of humanity were given in vain, or were a useless sacrifice, or without reward. Men died blessing her—wounded men prayed for her, and surely benedictions from hearts laden with gratitude must possess the prerogative of conferring blessings far beyond those usually allotted to mortals.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARRYING THE DISPATCH.

"Heaven is above all; there sits a judge
No King can corrupt."

According to the Northern newspapers, the rebel General de Courcy who had acquired no little celebrity for the brilliancy and the audacity of his attacks, was massing a force for the purpose of "hitting out" somewhere. But the best of human wisdom is frequently erroneous. At this time General de Courcy had no intention to strike anywhere, he was "only praying to be let alone" while engaged in collecting provisions to meet the pressing demands farther south.

So far his most strenuous efforts had met with discouragements; the bacon and corn had not only been "hard to come by," but it had been more difficult still to find means of transportation. The position, however, was an advantageous one, and that he would not be allowed to occupy it in peace and quietude much longer he well knew, but it was important to his cause to remain there so long as he could—but he "must not permit himself to be caught"—there was the rub.

He sat alone in his tent gravely considering his

situation. His information was reliable as to the location and strength of the Federal detachments nearest to him, and his own force was not inconsiderable. "They will not attempt," he muttered, "to drive me back until reinforced from Nashville, which will be soon. And oh! wouldn't it be a thing divinely done," he smiled grimly, "to find out positively when that move will be made. But what would be the use of risking a messenger—this war has been going on so long that all sorts of dodges are as transparent as a woman's veil."

General de Courcy was as little given as any officer alive to the sparing of his soldiers, looking on them as he did, as mere machines for destruction and to be destroyed; yet he was an able commander and knew his duty too well to risk even a single life in the face of certain failure. He shook his head, not seeing his way one inch about how to obtain the momentous intelligence.

Suddenly his face brightens—he is not the first commander indebted to chance for important results—and yet it was no more than the hearing in the distance a clear sweet voice singing:

> "And never another can ruffle it here,
> Like the lads of the snaffle, spur, and spear."

An idea flashed across the mind of General de Courcy like an inspiration; he rose quickly and sent an orderly to "fetch young Mr. Fane."

Of all the dare-devils in the Army of the South, and their name was legion, Reggie Fane was the most splendidly reckless. At the word "Charge!" he was off like a fiery scorpion—no authority could keep him back—and in advance of his squadron, he would dash pell-mell in the midst of the enemy, and with his bright blade flashing he fought like a demon. And marvelous seemed his immunity from danger, men fell in heaps all around, and he escaped scathless.

General de Courcy loved him as the apple of his eye, and after every engagement never failed to reprove him for his rashness, and always ended his reproof by saying: "You ought to be at school, sir." And so he ought to have been, he was only sixteen years of age.

Very soon a slight stripling entered the General's tent, saluted, and stood at attention.

For a moment General de Courcy regarded him searchingly, taking in every detail of the boy's exquisite beauty. The sun and wind, "those chartered libertines," had dealt kindly with the fairness and bloom of his complexion; his perfect features were delicate in their outlines, and his light chestnut hair had been blown by the wind into a tangled mass of silky curls. With immutable composure he stood sustaining the piercing glances of his General, who seemed in no hurry to speak; and when at last he opened his mouth it was apparently to

give vent only to some irrelevant side issue, so little did his remark appear to bear upon the burning question that then absorbed his mind. "You are not a man."

The boy's eyes twinkled as if some humorous reminiscence had been suggested.

"Perhaps not, General; still I think you must admit that you have seen me when I was a pretty good imitation of one."

The General, declining to enter into explanations, said abruptly:

"I want some one to go to Nashville."

"Meaning Reginald Fane?" asked the boy.

A nod was the sole response.

A look of decision beyond his years—lads were early trained in that rough warfaring period—came into young Fane's eyes as he answered:

"I am Southern born, and ready at any moment to give my life to my native land, but I would prefer it to be on the battle-field, and, frankly, General de Courcy, I do not care to be a spy, and request to be excused from this particular duty. I have followed you long, but here I draw bridle."

"Reggie," said the General in his deep tones, "I do not ask you to take a step I would shrink from myself. Could I change places with you I would go unhesitatingly."

The boy thawed.

"I beg your pardon, General," was the prompt

answer, "for being just a trifle obtuse; but I do not doubt that, if I live long enough, I will get over squeamishness. However, I am now quite willing to receive your instructions, and will carry them out to the best of my ability."

"Reggie," said General de Courcy in tones he did not often employ in speaking to his subordinates, "I do not know how this war will end. Neither do I know how right it was to bring it on, but I do know, that now we are in for it, doubts and regrets are out of place. We have drawn the sword, the scabbard is thrown away, and I would not spare my son! The mission I am going to send you on is one of extraordinary danger, requiring extraordinary address. Yet if you succeed in my design it will be of great benefit to us."

He hesitated as if reluctant to explain his plans. "Reggie, you will get to Nashville; choose your own way. When you arrive there go at once to the residence of Mrs. Thompson. She lives in Blank street, No. 137. This lady has a daughter, Miss Thompson, who will be willing on application to furnish you with all you may need of her own clothing." Reggie started, and seemed inclined to bolt, but recovered himself. "You will then find out at what hotel General Thorne and his niece are stopping. Then, in the character of a young lady, establish yourself at the same hotel, plausibly; then make the acquaintance of the General's niece, casually,

and select a suitable time to communicate to her that you are sent from me, and that I wish timely warning when a force will be sent out from Nashville to operate against me."

"General de Courcy," said the boy in amazement, if not in horror, "do you mean to say that the niece of General Thorne will be willing to furnish you with that information?"

Imagine the feelings of a Greek professor when brought to book by a controverting freshman. In military affairs the pressure on private judgment is even greater than in universities. General de Courcy, however, only smiled indulgently, and answered:

"This fratricidal war, my boy, is a horrid war, and while General Thorne's niece has and will continue to aid us in any way in her power, it is likely, I may say absolutely sure, that General Thorne has a friend with us equally zealous to serve him."

Young Fane boyishly put two fingers to his lips and subduedly imitated a steam whistle.

"Well, it really does appear," he said, "that if both sides, North and South, were evened up, we would be where we were before the war—all at peace, and in brotherly love."

Whilst Reginald Fane did not like this expedition planned for him, he was not inexperienced in the masquerading part of it. In private theatricals he had impersonated lovely women with signal suc-

cess. But there non-success would not have entailed any very serious consequences. Failure here meant a shameful death. "Though," reasoned the gallant boy, "if the risk must be encountered, why not I as well as another?" and he answered quite resignedly:

"Well, General, I am good to try. When do you wish me to set out to make the acquaintance of the ladies, Thompson and General Thorne's niece? But it really does look queer to me that you depend so much on women. Of their enthusiasm there can be no doubt, but in important matters, where men's lives are at stake, I would prefer to chance the steadiness of a man."

"That's because you are so young, Reggie, and have not yet learned that when a woman really is in earnest she is as true as steel and equal to any danger. The Southern women are terribly in earnest; but for them this war would have faded out in six months. I wish you to start at once, and, Reggie, I am imposing on you a great trust; there is more depending on your success than I can explain, and while I know you can be discreet beyond your years, and there is little I can advise, yet I would caution you about your deportment when at the hotel in Nashville. You must never forget yourself and sit down with your feet sprawling wide apart; but you must keep them well together and hid under the folds of your gown. And above all, do not let

a spirit of mischief lead you into attempting flirtations with the Federal officers. Inevitably you must meet with them, but be reserved, and keep them all at a distance, like a modest, properly behaving young lady."

"Modest, properly behaving young ladies," blurted out Reggie, "are not found at public hotels without a chaperon; I may be young, but I know that. And I know that appearances will be against me, and that I just will be obliged to conduct myself with faultless discretion, otherwise my career will be brief. But on this head you may rest easy, General; should any of the blue-coats fall victims to my charms it will be from pure cussedness. I am not going to encourage any of them. It would suit me to be treated with indifference bordering on contempt. Therefore, if you have nothing further to add give me my password and I will light out on my outing. My departure from camp must not be, I suppose, attended with flourish of trumpet or beat of drum. The sooner I am off the sooner I will return—perhaps."

A word was whispered in his ear, he then saluted and stepped briskly out from the General's tent, that officer looked after him wistfully, muttering under his breath: "I wish this cursed war at an end, and I don't know that I am so overly particular how it ends, but till the wind-up comes I must do my duty."

He had chosen his envoy with rare sagacity. In times of war, particularly civil war, it is not uncommon to see old heads on young shoulders, but it was something marvelous the dexterity with which Reggie Fane managed his dangerous enterprise. He got into Nashville "without a bobble," and adroitly established himself at the Nashville House in the character of Miss Forney, a young lady who expected to meet her grandmother and was ineffably disconcerted at having arrived first. Words can hardly do justice to the beauty of his behavior—reserved even with ladies. And his timidity in receiving the courteous attentions of the numerous U. S. officers who thronged the hotel was touching. He showed no anxiety to make the acquaintance of General Thorne's niece while contriving to bring it about in the most natural and casual manner imaginable, and the password whispered by his General placed them at once en rapport. The niece readily promised her assistance. "I will give you the information," she said, "when I can get it, but such things cannot be done in any set way—I must wait for the opportunity to serve."

To impose as little confidence as possible seemed to Master Reggie extreme wisdom, and he saw no object to gain by revealing his sex to Miss Thorne, who had no suspicion of the truth. Indeed, it seemed to her the very acme of good policy that the rebel General should choose a female for this deli-

cate service; and this female was so attractive of appearance, and gentle of manner, as to at once win the regard of General Thorne's niece, and she said, with the kindest intention: "Miss Forney, as there will perhaps be a delay of some days, perhaps weeks, and you are all alone in this big caravansary, suppose you share my room."

Reggie Fane was completely taken aback, and for the first time in his life showed the white feather. He almost burst into tears, and stammered: "It would really give me great pleasure, but—I can't!"

Miss Thorne was surprised at this unusual exhibition, but seeing his genuine distress, said good-naturedly:

"Oh! very well, just as you like—I thought it would be agreeable to you. But on no account must you shut yourself up in your room; it would occasion comment—army people are so sociable. So you must come into the parlor occasionally, and take your meals in the dining room, and when thrown with the officers treat them civilly."

There never has been a time since the world was made when woman's beauty and woman's timidity did not appeal irresistibly to manly hearts; and the exigencies of war dispenses with much of the usual formalities which are expected to give place to snap and vim; therefore, Miss Forney became at once an object of idolatry. Even the elderly

heart of General Thorne surrendered at discretion; and to his great delight the diffident young lady who drew back in painful embarrassment from the proffered attentions of his juniors, evidently was more at her ease with him.

To make a long story short, it soon became the ardent desire of this gallant upholder of his country's flag—he had grown old fighting for it, and still wore the sword he had used at San Juan de Ulloa, National Bridge, Contreras, Cerro Gordo, Molino del Rey, Churubusco, Chapultepec and the City of Mexico—to win this bashful, wayside flower for his own. Poor gentleman! it seemed bitter irony that he who in his manly prime had never been so much as tapped on the shoulder by Dan Cupid should now bring his honest affection to where they had no business. But that did not affect the question or prevent General Thorne from really feeling very happy. So happy that he quite neglected the rebel General de Courcy, who was actively improving his golden opportunities and dispatching many wagon loads southward of the staples of life—meat and corn.

From his sweet dream General Thorne was aroused by a direct inquiry from the War Department "why he did not move against the rebel De Courcy?" Pulling himself together, he determined to strike soon and hard, and return quickly to his charmer.

No matter what be the urgency of the need a *corps d'armée* cannot start on the spur of the moment, for a distant delivery of battle. It must make ready, and in making ready General Thorne certainly displayed the most energetic activity. The bustle of preparation had hardly commenced when the General's niece handed a folded paper to Miss Forney and suggested its delivery to General de Courcy without loss of time. Reginald Fane felt a thrill of rapture.

His days of enforced idleness had been days of moral and physical torture. He pined with the longing of a caged bird for the careless gayety of the rough camp he had left behind, and which to rejoin would be a work of difficulty, and must be begun at once. He displayed strategy of a high order in the manner by which he contrived to pass unnoticed from the crowded hotel. And, avoiding populous streets, he threaded his sinuous way until he saw not very far distant the blessed haven of Mrs. Thompson's roof, under which the female dress, that not only hampered his limbs, but more, it seemed to narrow his mental and moral nature, could be exchanged for his own glorious and much-prized masculine habiliments. Suddenly, as if dropped from the clouds, General Thorne stood before him. Young Fane's blue eyes gleamed with that wicked light first seen when Cain struck down his brother, and a sharp-edged stiletto flashed

in the sunlight. "Don't try to stop me, or by God I'll kill you!" he said in a hissing whisper.

A braver or a readier man never lived than General Thorne, but he staggered back, as if confronted by a horrible apparition conjured by some unholy incantation. "Oh, my Lord!" he groaned, as if he had received a mortal stab. His knees smote together and his forehead was damp with an awful dew. "Oh, merciful heavens! what has happened to me?" A deep sob burst from him. His pious ejaculations seemed an exorcism, for the vision was no longer before him, it had disappeared. He moved on slowly. A depression as from beyond the grave completely mastered him as he recalled the past. "I have always been too forward in battle, and the blood I have shed has come back in a frightful, a material form—it has assumed the form I love best—to torment me. Perhaps it foretells my approaching doom; and some poor spirit has come back from its unquiet prison house to say to me: 'We shall meet again at Philippi!' Lord help me! Lord help me!" Ill in body and mind he reached the hotel and retired to his chamber, nor was he again visible until the morning of the forward movement, then he asked his niece: "Where is Miss Forney?"

"Lying down in her room suffering with a headache," was the prompt answer.

General Thorne felt an emotion of pleasure,

doubtless she was distressed that he was starting for battle.

"Could I not see her just for a moment—to take leave?" he asked, almost piteously.

"Certainly not," was the decided answer, "Miss Forney has nerves, and they are troubling her at present. She nearly snapped my head off a minute ago when I recommended a teaspoonful of valerian."

General Thorne was disappointed at not seeing Miss Forney, yet he felt some satisfaction; it was encouraging that her headache and his going away should be simultaneous.

It is needless to say that Master Reggie's disappearance from General Thorne's bewildered sight was owing to a rapid flank movement, skillfully executed; and that he lost no time in reaching cover and replacing his feminine garb with his own rough costume, which, thanks to Mrs. Thompson, had been washed and the crowning luxury of cleanliness was added to its suitability.

The good fortune which seemed to have marked him for her own did not desert the young tactician until he had evaded the various lines of pickets and was well out on his way back to the uncomfortable camp to which he was attached. How sharply it contrasted with the well-appointed accommodations for soldiers he had just left; but, oh! he did so yearn to see it again, and how glad and free he

felt! he could scarcely refrain from shouting with joy. He felt inclined to sing, and was just ready to uplift a merry stave.

Young people will not see it; but their elders have seen it and know that from a cloudless sky a thunderbolt not infrequently strikes; and that it is always better to wait for the coming of night before praising a fair day. If he had not been so preoccupied with his foolish joy he would have observed and avoided that group of Federal soldiers in front of him. Now it was too late; he was almost in their midst. They, too, were taken by surprise as they lounged on the grass—a party of scouts—each man holding his horse by the bridle-rein loosely, or not at all, so busy were they in eating a luncheon.

Instinct is heaven born, and sometimes serves in better stead than the most elaborate process of ratiocination; and our youngster was excelled in cheek by no son of Adam. "My eyes! my hearties!" he drawled, sauntering up, "are you game for a partner in your grub?"

A beautiful thoroughbred, with its large and intelligent eyes and upraised graceful head—its bridle-rein thrown over the protuberant part of the saddle-bow—stood near. "A nicish bit of horseflesh! Say, now, where did you come up with that Kentucky racer?" asked Reggie Fane, wriggling

along until at the horse's side. Then quick as a flash he was in the saddle and galloping away.

Fifteen or twenty guns were raised.

"Don't shoot, men!" ordered the leader. "Mount and follow; that booming water-course three miles ahead will stop him. The young scamp deserves a canter for his smartness."

It would be impossible to describe the boundless, rollicking, exhilarating joy that throbbed through and through every nerve and fiber of Reggie's body as he felt the bounding of the good horse under him. Even the importance of his mission and his peril could not destroy the exquisite pleasure of the rapid motion.

Let no one deny the good-fellowship that not infrequently exists between steed and rider. By some mysterious process, in a life-and-death crisis, the heart and mind of each are linked together in one common impulse, and Reggie felt sure that his silent friend was a friend indeed, and would neither falter nor fail. On, on he went, his pursuers hard behind, until not three hundred yards in his front his quick eye caught the glitter of a broad rolling stream, which like a band of silver lay across his way. He heard the peals of the loud laughter behind. "Caught in a trap," he muttered. "But we'll try for freedom! won't we my beauty?" he apostrophized the horse. Glancing backward, to calculate the distance separating him from that steady

galloping group, he gently drew rein, for he well knew that the horse, good as he was, required easing before the terrific burst of speed to give him impetus for that wide, wide leap.

When he slackened his speed, his pursuers also slackened theirs, from a grim sense of humor, thinking his capture distant only a short interval of time. Warily Reggie scanned them from over his shoulder while considering to an inch the decreasing margin of ground before him until, it was now or never. He tightened his grasp of the bridle, and, bringing into use every one of the many methods by which the practiced rider can assist a tired steed, he urged the good horse on to the leap. There was a dash like the rushing of a tornado, then rising high in the air, the swift waters flowing beneath them, the good horse sprang over, and they are landed on the safe side with only one scant inch to spare.

With shouts of rage the baffled pursuers quickly bring their guns to bear, and from the dark muzzles leap short jets of flame, hurling out the deadly bullets. But without pause, that young-old boy took his horse in hand, and galloped on until he reached a safe eminence, then with his blue eyes sparkling with mirth, he turned square around in the saddle, and, raising his cap with a courteous movement, shouted: "I hope it is not farewell, gentlemen, only au revoir!"

He then jogged quietly on, with an easy stride, to which hill or dale never came amiss, and the miles were swallowed up like furlongs, until the familiar camp of his comrades came into sight.

His impulse was to indulge in "the rebel-yell." But age is a question of experience, not of time, and in consideration of what he had gone through he thought that manifestation too boyish, and in lieu of which he began singing:

"We are the boys that can wrestle and ride,
Empty a saddle, and empty a can;
Keeping the rights of the Border side—
Warden to warden, and man to man.
Never another so welcome here
As the lads of the snaffle, spur, and spear."

A soldier's life is a hard one, but it has its compensations—"chaff" is one of the most common.

In an incredibly short space of time Reggie was surrounded by the Gray Jackets, and if their welcome was rough it was well meant.

"Hip! hip! hurrah for Reggie!"

"Reggie is my darling, the young chevalier!"

"And Reggie it is, fit as a fiddle and fine as a star!"

"Been a courting, now."

"Reggie, my dear, where did you get that sweet angel you are on?"

"Keep hands off, every mother's son of you," requested the object of so much special attention.

"Can't a body slip home to get clean clothes without all this pow-wow about it? As for the horse, I just found him all bridled and saddled, ready to my hand, and I—borrowed him."

"Are you going to make him a present to the General?" asked several voices.

"I rather guess not. But where is the General? I had better go and explain to him. I expect his ideas are that I had gone a glimmering. Answer some of you, one at a time."

"Well, at present he is in his tent sleeping—thank heaven! I think he has been hearing bad news, his temper has got to be so—fractious is no name for it. And, Reggie, my pet, I wouldn't advise you to be the man to wake him up; for while he hasn't asked for you, so far as I know, I've seen him look over to where you hang out more than once."

"Oh! you dry up, Jim Bates, trying to unhitch a fellow's nerves. I don't believe he'll kill me, and I can stand about as much scare as the next one. Here you, Pete Riley, hold this quadruped until I return."

He dismounted and made his way to the General's tent, making no little fuss as he entered. The sleeping warrior awoke with a start, and, seeing Reggie, looked greatly relieved.

"I am glad to see you back, my boy, I had about given you up as lost."

"No, General, I was not lost! But I have not been exactly happy. However, here is your dispatch." He straightened up, saluted and pulled the important paper from his pocket—his fingers were stiffened and cramped from the rigid clasp he had been compelled to maintain on the bridle, and the dispatch dropped to the ground; and, not being in an envelope, spread wide open, the writing plain for the reading. And as Reggie read a look of horror crept into his face, and he gazed as if a basilisk lay at his feet.

"What are you gaping at?" demanded the General.

"Gape yourself!" cried the incensed boy, "and see for yourself what comes of relying on a woman for important information. She couldn't keep her mind away from her gimcracks long enough to see that she sent you the right paper. That thing!" with intense contempt, "is a bill for a bonnet."

It read:

"Herewith, I send your account for the bonnet purchased. Please remit by Tuesday."

"It's all right, Reggie," said the General, after a hasty glance. "Things sometimes mean more than appear on the surface. My experience is, you can trust a woman every time."

Reggie was glad to know that it was right; but he couldn't see it, and began to entertain doubts

of his own ability to know what was what, particularly concerning nouns feminine. So he saluted and went out into the open air to look after and to make much of the valuable horse recently acquired.

General de Courcy, understanding that the day set for payment of the female headwear referred to the day the Federal troops would march out of Nashville, sounded "boots and saddles," and told the men to "hustle."

And General Thorne arrived in time only to find the fires extinguished, and the silence of a deserted camp. He went back to Nashville, and returned the report that the rebel General had gone southward after merely making a reconnoissance in force; and that he had found that part of the country peaceable. It is a foregone conclusion that his inquiries concerning Miss Forney were prompt and anxious.

"Oh!" replied his niece, indifferently, "Miss Forney is not here. Owing to her grandmother's illness, or something equally unjustifiable, she was sent for. And so far as I know, like the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air she has gone, leaving no trace behind her."

Poor old General Thorne! his grief was sincere and lasting. He had arrived at that time of life when if love's light fail, and the last rose wither,

the loss cannot be retrieved. Still it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. It had been a dream from Paradise. A phantom star that had streamed across his sky, just once—then fell to rise no more.

CHAPTER XX.

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

"A good heart is the sun and the moon, or rather the sun,
For it shines bright, and never changes."

"I wonder that you never married, Uncle Phil," began Gerry one day, trying as she often did now to divert the old man from a settled melancholy, from which it was difficult to arouse him.

"Well, honey, ter tell de truf," was the modest answer, "dar wus er dozen er mo' young gals in Wirginny dat I 'lowed ter hab hopes—but I drawed off in time. Mar'age has its 'sponsibilities dat I dident keer ter tote. It's wery ill-conwenient when er 'oman gits it inter her haid dat she is boun' ter sh'ar y'u baid an' bo'de. 'Sides in siety er mar'red man ain't got no show erlong 'sides ob er man dat kin be kotched. It always suited me ter be run arter. An'," he continued with the garrulity of age, "I didn't hate mar'age none at dat time ter what I doos now. But," hurriedly recollecting himself, "Good Lordy! honey, I don't mean ter hurt y'u feelin's, chile. Y'u ain't ter blame fer nuthin'. T'ings happen in dis world an' no body knows how it wus done," and trying to counsel resignation, "we hab jess got ter b'ar it—dat's all."

And indeed it frequently does seem that the privilege of free action belongs to no one; and that we are controlled by the inevitable fetters of circumstances, and our paths limited by the regulations of the part allotted.

Gerry's fierce hatred of Hamilton had given place to a weary disgust. It did seem so bitter hard, she was so young, that the old, happy, beautiful life should be at an end forever. And sacred in the storehouse of her memory was the never-to-be-forgotten time when the strongest feelings of her being were stirred to their depths, and revealing in one supreme moment all the exquisite bliss of which her ardent nature was capable.

A shadow darkened the opening of her tent, and Hamilton hesitatingly entered, accoutered for battle. Of late he had shown deference to Gerry's wishes and rarely intruded his presence upon her. Perhaps:

> "Consideration, like an angel, came,
> And whipped the offending Adam out of him."

His marriage with Geraldine Southampton, which had at first seemed to him a crowning victory, now confronted him as a crushing defeat. Conscience may for a time be kept at bay, but a day of reckoning will come, and the debt long incurred will have to be paid to the uttermost farthing. And the Eumenides had overtaken him. He paused,

glancing at Gerry. How well he remembered her gay, bright beauty which contrasted so strangely with the patient sorrow that now rarely left her face. He knew that his own hand had wrought this change. He knew that he was accountable for this fearful work of destruction, and it was useless to plead that it was greater than he had intended.

It had been long delayed, but he now felt himself in the grasp of a remorse that would never leave him; and of late he had been having premonitions, which he accepted as a certainty that the next battle he went into would be his last; and he had a longing to hear Gerry say that she forgave him. There had been a time when his cool, scientific atrocity seemed rather to belong to a fiend than the most depraved of men. But now he stood in her presence abashed. He had come to sue for her forgiveness.

The inconsistencies of human nature have been wonderful in all ages. The wicked King John, when he saw that his end was approaching, gave especial directions that his body should be buried close to the grave of Saint Wulstan, who had great reputation for sanctity; perhaps thinking it would be some guarantee of safety in the next world.

Hamilton spoke with timidity, his eyes cast down:

"I am ordered to the front, and it is not probable that I shall live to return—Geraldine."

She looked at him quickly, with a slight frown, the concluding vocative displeased her, and she replied with a mocking emphasis:

"Did not the Athenians wreath with laurel the sword that killed the Pisistratidæ?"

This man who had been so hard of heart, whose whole life had been a selfish seeking after his own ends, actually paled at her tones, and gaspingly he said:

"Death is horrible!"

"Not yours," she answered, "and if I were a Romanist I would then burn six great candles to our Lady of Good Succor in thankfulness for my freedom."

It is strange that now, when he was using his best effort to soften her, he should so go on from bad to worse—using the very words of all others the most calculated to inflame her.

"I am asking your forgiveness. I am your husband."

An expression immediately settled on her face different from even intense anger in its absolute pitilessness. Her voice took on harsh, strange intonations, indescribable, as she asked:

"Are you trying to exert the superiority of a man? And at this late day dare you claim the prerogative of a husband? I am a lonely woman with my affections warped, not crushed. What have you made my life but one desperate struggle—one

long agony? Man, do you know what you have made me? I am abhorrent to myself. And there has always been the stinging sense of an injury unrequited—a dishonor unavenged—a debt uncanceled; and now you ask me to forgive you; and you seek aid from me in this eleventh hour to quiet the tumult raging between a hardened heart and a remorseful conscience. No! You have sown the dragon's teeth and the armed warriors have risen to confront you—your eyes in death will look upon them. Go!"

A sob escaped the wretched Hamilton as he turned hopelessly to depart.

Uncle Phil, who, crouching in a corner, had been an unnoticed witness of this interview, now sprang forward, and, throwing himself on his knees before Gerry, pleaded with uplifted hands:

"Oh! chile! chile! fer my sake—fer y'u sake—fer de honor ob de Southamptons! say y'u fergive him! Somethin' in my ole heart seems ter say dat he is gwine ter his doom. Don't lay up dat sin ter be arnswerd fer dat y'u 'fused fergiveness ter er man on his de'th-baid, so ter speak, an' saunt his soul ter torment. Chile! chile! jes say y'u fergive him! jes dis onct!"

Gerry looked down on the old man. He was now grasping her dress, his eyes streaming, and his lips continuing to move in wordless supplication.

Miracles have not ceased, then occurred one as

tremendous as when, at the stroke of Moses, the living waters flowed from the dry rock, and approximating in grandeur the divine words of forgiveness uttered on the cross by a dying Savior.

Gerry placed her hands on the white head of Uncle Phil, and let them rest there, as if to gather strength to speak the words which almost seemed to take her life, though they were few:

"I forgive you. Go in peace."

Hamilton quitted the tent with his head drooping. Three hours later he was killed in battle.

Disaster after disaster followed the arms of the South until there came that awful defeat before Franklin.

For some time past Gerry had been viewing with great concern the condition of Uncle Phil on whom privations and troubles had increased in an inverse ratio with his ability to bear up under them. He was old and poor, but not alone. The child he had brought "bird aigs ter, an' hilt er umereller ober," was now a woman, and in her turn was ready to care for him. And she resolved that whatever length of life should be allotted to him should be accomplished in such ease, and with such comforts, as her best efforts would be able to procure for him.

She had been tenderly brought up, and lovingly shielded from all rough contact; and it seemed an appalling thing to leave such helps as still sur-

rounded her, and to step out in the cold, perhaps unfriendly world, and join the army of bread-winners battling for subsistence. But the strength of her purpose required neither concentration nor arrangement—many of her instincts seemed to have the basis of reason; and quickly she evolved her plans—all for the welfare of Uncle Phil.

She wrote a letter, a kindly letter to Hamilton's mother, saying that her son had perished in battle fighting gallantly, and that his interment had taken place with due care, and that when his mother wished, his remains could be removed for burial with the others of his family. And for herself she renounced forever such pecuniary interest as might be hers at law. Then Gerry took an affectionate leave of the people with whom she had been living so long, and went away with Uncle Phil to Nashville, where she established herself not in a boarding house, but in a small cottage, and Uncle Phil fairly reveled in the management of their small housekeeping.

Gerry's beautiful hand-writing readily secured for her plenty of copying to do for the lawyers, and she not only earned sufficient for their absolute wants, but also to furnish Uncle Phil with such clothing as gladdened his heart.

In his neat suit of black broadcloth, and with his gold-head cane he presented a venerable, and, as he fully persuaded himself, a dignified appear-

ance, as he passed and repassed the principal streets carrying a portfolio containing Gerry's copyings. And on one day, when a large rocking-chair was bought for his own use, his joy knew no bounds.

"But, Miss Gerry, honey, I ain't sho' dat it ain't onproper fer me ter be settin' in dat cheer. Now ef it wus er cricket it wouldn't be onproper. In Wirginny, ole Miss she had crickets settin' round mos' eber wh'ar fer us sarvents ter set oursefs on."

"Good Gracious, Uncle Phil!" said Gerry with a smile, "how could you ever sit on a cricket?"

"Dat's so, chile; 'do I mought manage ter set down on it—but dar's de gettin' up, which would be diffikilt, wid my ole, stiff knees."

The rocking-chair proved of great comfort to him, and hour after hour he would sit rocking himself gently, crooning old-time hymns.

To do one's duty willingly and honestly in the state of life decreed by Providence always ensures content, and often happiness. And youth is such a beautiful, bountiful possession, with its elastic spirit and its inexhaustible resources.

Gerry had lost the feeling of being over-weighted, and with no heart for the race of life, and she no longer felt inclined to challenge fate, and to impeach its hard decrees. She was not living a life of idleness and frivolity, but a full, dignified life of

practical usefulness. And Uncle Phil frequently declared:

"I neber 'lowed ter be so happy ergin in dis world."

And so time went on until the whole country went wild over the peace that was made at the Appomattox Court House.

There came a day, when Gerry was sitting at her writing, when Uncle Phil rushed in. As usual, she looked up to give him the welcoming smile, and it was easy to see that something unusual had occurred. The old man's appearance and demeanor indicated the pressure of some strong mental excitement. He grinned—his eyes rolled—and he took one or two dancing steps, chuckling like a boy.

Gerry smiled pleasantly, expecting nothing more had happened than that he had found some "high quality white gempleman," who had listened with interest to his talk about Virginia, and perhaps the Southamptons. But he burst out, quivering with excitement:

"Oh! Miss Gerry, chile, honey, don't 'cite y'use'f. T'aint nuthin! it mought happen eber day—but I jess heard from Marse Paul—I seed him, an' here he is."

This was all the preparation, but:

> "If he is sick with joy, he will
> Recover without a physician."

And the two persons, to whom their love had

caused so much grief, now stood face to face with no longer an unbridged gulf between them. Uncle Phil had withdrawn. And surely this was a meeting to be witnessed only by the angels.

Sometimes fortune comes with both hands full; and it was not a modest tap, but a bold roulade on the knocker which drew Uncle Phil to the door, and in a few moments he reappeared, but not alone. And now, it was not the joy of earth, but the pure light of Heaven that glistened in his eyes, and his voice had taken on an intonation it never had before. There was no preamble.

"Miss Gerry, I have de honor ter denounce ter y'u de safe return ob our young gemplemens. Glory ter de Lord!"

The young Southamptons had indeed returned. And the cup of happiness which had been so long in its plenishing now flowed over, and they drank of its sweet waters in silent thankfulness.

An unusual sound drew their attention to Uncle Phil. He was standing, but unsteadily. His body swayed—his trembling hands were crossed on his breast, and the strangely musical voice was again heard:

"Mine eyes hab seed de glory ob de Lord! Let thy sarvent now depart in peace."

It was Gerry who sprang and caught the falling body in her strong young arms, but the Messenger had been before her. Uncle Phil was dead.

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